## *Single people and homelessness: a sociological study of Durham Cyrenlans*

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# Abstract

of

# Single People and Homelessness

## A Sociological Study of Durham Cyrenians

This study is presented in two sections. The first is about national and local housing issues and homelessness, providing contextual background for the history of Durham Cyrenians, a small project providing accommodation and support for single homeless people. The second section is about the social processes experienced by residents, volunteer workers and management committee members as they join the project, become involved in it and leave it.

The theoretical framework within which this study is set is that of the relationship between the centre and the periphery of society. The essence of the study is that homelessness is a socially created problem arising out of the centre periphery relationship, not one of inadequate people and it is suggested that it is with this understanding that change can be realised.

# SINGLE PEOPLE AND HOMELESSNESS

## A Sociological Study of Durham Cyrenians

by

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Durham.

# SINGLE PEOPLE AND HOMELESSNESS

## A Sociological Study of Durban Cyrenians

## C O N T E N T S

TABLES



Abbreviations:

HM House Meeting

WC Worker's Comments

OKS Oakenshaw House

To David Constantine for setting up Durham Cyrenians and to residents past, present and future.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the support and help that Dr. V. Williamson has provided both as the supervisor for this study and as a fund of information about Durham Cyrenians. Dr. Williamson has been a unique source of material, expanding on bare statements about major and minor events over the many years of his close involvement with Durham Cyrenians and filling in gaps where other sources had disappeared.

I wish to thank all the many people who have given up valuable time to talk about Durham Cyrenians. I also wish to thank the many friends and colleagues who discussed the project with me, especially Debbie and Alan who also read the final draft and made useful comments and suggestions. The patient assistance provided by Liz in reading handwritten diaries and other material was invaluable and very much appreciated. Thanks are also extended to Margaret who advised me on all practical matters relating to the production of a thesis. The support of my family, frequently neglected, has to be acknowledged; without it I could not have completed this study.

The names of all residents and volunteers have been changed to ensure confidentiality.. As the names of past and present management committee members are available in minutes of meetings it was agreed that these need not be changed.

Finally I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Shakespeare Temperance Trust, the Manpower Services Commission and the Royal National Institute for the Blind which allowed me to undertake this study.

# SINGLE PEOPLE AND HOMELESSNESS

## A Sociological Study of Durham Cyrenians

### INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to present the problem of single homelessness as a social, political, economic and cultural issue. The focus is on Durham Cyrenians, a small local project providing accommodation for single homeless people, which operates within the voluntary sector. The setting for this account of Durham Cyrenians is the growing national problem of homelessness. The overall increase in single homelessness is of concern in itself, while the rapid growth in youth homelessness, women's homelessness and the homelessness of patients discharged from psychiatric hospitals are aspects of the national problem which are reflected in the experience of local groups such as Durham Cyrenians.

### OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to combine a detailed study of Durham Cyrenians and a general overview of single homelessness and has had three main objectives.

The first objective has been to gain an understanding of the broad issues surrounding single homelessness at a local and national level. This is essential background material for the second objective, that is, an account of the history of Durham Cyrenians. This discussion is set in the context of the local community, but is also related to the national situation and the significant ideological and economic changes which occurred between the early 1970's and the late 1980's.

The third objective has been to explore aspects of social, political and economic relationships within British society as a whole. The study of



Durham Cyrenians, its residents, its volunteer workers and members of the management committee has provided an opportunity to look at relationships between and within these groups. In addition the relationships between Durham Cyrenians and the local authority, the local press, other local and national agencies, funding bodies and the various local neighbourhoods in which Cyrenian houses were established have been discussed in terms of how the project succeeded in gaining the resources it required to provide shelter and support for some homeless single people. Similar issues are addressed in relation to single homelessness as a social problem in terms of the seriousness with which it is taken and the resources allocated to it.

The local project and the problem as a whole are linked by using the same approach to gain insights into the processes which make it difficult for the former to survive and the latter to achieve recognition as a matter of national priority. This particular approach is to analyse the experiences of Durham Cyrenians and the problem of single homelessness in terms of where they stand in relation to what could be called mainstream society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The idea of centre periphery relationships has been used throughout this study, creating a theoretical framework for each section of the account while at the same time providing a link between them.

In this search for answers to how it is that societies continue to exist, how they appear to remain integrated when conflict and coercion seem to dominate rather than consensus, Shils used the centre periphery concept His interest focussed on consensus in society and he states the problem in the following way:

> "It is terribly difficult to describe and analyze the processes and structures which form families and classes,

neighbourhoods and regions, schools and churches, factories and ethnic groups into a single society." (Shils, 1975)

It is the linkages between all these parts of society and how they constitute the whole that Shils is concerned with. The 'integration of the black sector of American society' is provided as an example of 'the more general class of relationships between center and periphery'.

In this study the centre periphery concept is used in a different way, referring to processes through which groups in mainstream society are able to retain their central position and command over resources and how the periphery is unable to change this situation to any great extent. Through this perspective the reality of the social nature of the problem of single homelessness becomes apparent. For the single person made homeless, for whatever reason, it is the lack of available, affordable decent accommodation that is the problem causing the homelessness. Single people as a group in society are more subject to becoming homeless and not having the range of housing options available to other mainstream groups in society, a position arising from mainstream decision-making which denies single people the legal right to housing which is accorded to most members of society.

The centre periphery concept has been helpful in gaining some understanding of relationships within Durham Cyrenians from which generalisations about the nature of voluntary groups have been drawn. Not only have centre periphery relationships been identified between the groups but also within the three groups involved in the project, that is, the resident group, volunteer group and committee group.

Within the overall centre periphery perspective other concepts have been used in attempting to gain insight into how the processes involved in

becoming homeless are experienced by single people. Amonst the most important of these concepts is that of career.

The notion of career, a sequence of events, carries with it the idea of process, of the social, political and economic forces which shape the lives of individuals or the nature and development of groups in society. Change and movement as inherent features of the concept of career are closely associated with the theoretical framework of centre periphery (Becker, 1963). The career of single homelessness illustrates this in the following way.

Being single places an individual towards the periphery of a family-based society. The provision of housing is geared to families in practical, political and fiscal ways, thus excluding single people which places them in a marginal position in the housing market. With access to only a limited range of accommodation single people have correspondingly less access to mainstream benefits such as a legal right to housing and financial subsidies for housing. Placed in this way on the periphery of the housing market, single people are more vulnerable to losing accommodation and becoming subject to a career which goes something like this. The loss of accommodation is followed by loss of access to the employment market, the benefit system and health care. Hostels, bed and breakfast establishments or sleeping rough are the remaining alternatives and complete the career of single homelessness.

The concept of career applied to single homelessness highlights three fundamental points. First, it demonstrates the social nature of the problem of single homelessness. Secondly, it points to factors which could be changed to address the issue and thirdly, it illustrates most clearly that

for the majority of single people becoming homeless is not the result of individual inadequacy but because of forces beyond their control.

Running in parallel with the career of single homelessness is the career of property. Many a hostel in an inner city urban area began as the home of the wealthy of the nineteenth century. With the fashion to move out of cities this type of housing was converted into flats or bedsits. With the collapse of the private rented sector in the 1960's this type of property was on the market again at a time of expansion for hostels and bed and breakfast establishments. Whole neighbourhoods underwent this process until the present position was reached where property nearing the end of its useful life is used to provide accommodation for single people who have little choice in the matter of housing.

The concept of group dynamics has been used, again within the overall framework of centre periphery, in analysing both the internal group living in the project and the relationships between the three identified groups involved - the resident group, volunteer workers group and the management committee group.

The stereotype of a single homeless person is that of a 'down and out', a white male, middle aged or old, dirty and ragged, slumped somewhere in a public place with a bottle either lying empty nearby or sticking out of the old mackintosh tied around the waist with grubby string. This is the image presented by the media and accepted by society as a true representation of single people without homes. This is the force of stereotyping which demonstrates the power of the centre to reinforce attitudes and behaviour. In the case of homelessness the portrayal of the problem as one caused by personal inadequacy denies that homelessness is a socially created problem and that it should be addressed as such.

The fundamental feature of the stereotypical single homeless person is that the individual is seen as inadequate and personally responsible for the position in which they find themselves. The reality of the situation is that the centre has control over the resources of society and allocates these resources to meet the needs of mainstream society. Any unfortunate consequences of such allocations are presented in terms which justify and rationalise this system. Thus stereotyping plays an essential role in the process of the marginalisation of single homeless people.

Communication issues have been identified as an underlying problem for the project, for example, between residents, between residents and workers, between workers and committee members and the resident group and the committee group. In looking at communication problems which have arisen over the years the concept of class culture, where middle and working class cultures come into contact, has been used in attempting to understand conflicting attitudes about money, about cleaning and roles within the project. One example of this, which appears to have been of concern throughout the life of the project, centred around the word and concept of 'responsibility'. Can the meaning to one person be adequately communicated to another? Can complex concepts be explained in simple vocabulary? Does a limited vocabulary exclude the possibility of understanding ideas and concepts or expressing deep feelings and emotions? Discourse analysis would help to provide insight to these philosophical questions but lies beyond the scope of this study.

Working within the centre periphery framework and using concepts to explore the experiences of Durham Cyrenians has provided a basis from which it has been possible to draw some generalisations about single homelessness from the patterns that emerged over the years.

## LIMITATIONS

The basic limitation of this study is that size and scale in that it is of one local project working with single homeless people. Further studies of a comparative type would be valuable as the next stage in extending and deepening awareness and understanding of the social nature of single homelessness which have been started in this account.

This study is not one of social policy although it is set in a time of many policy changes affecting the single homeless. As a source of information on single homelessness it is relevant to social policy as background material about the problem. Many of the issues are discussed from the perspective of single people who are homeless, for example, resettlement unit closures, board and lodging regulations, housing benefit changes, housing association funding. Other changes on the horizon such as the rate reforms planned for the 1990 will have serious implications for the single homeless and projects such as Durham Cyrenians.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods used in this study have been qualitative. As Finch points out:

> "the distinctive features of qualitative research concern matters of both research techniques and epistemology, that is, the philosophical basis which underpins the research process, especially the question of how valid knowledge about the social world is generated." (Finch, 1986, p.5)

Both these features of qualitative research were suitable for this study. The research techniques were the most appropriate for an in depth, small scale study with an emphasis on how those involved experience their social world and the meanings they attribute to it. This approach would seem to be the most suitable one to gain 'valid knowledge' about the social world of the single people who are homeless.

My involvement with Durham Cyrenians as a committee member goes back to 1980 when I was launched into daily contact with the project by being appointed temporary treasurer over the summer holiday period. Through this role I rapidly got to know the residents and volunteer worker who were living in 50 Dragonville which by that time had become well established.

In August 1981 I took over the post of secretary and a central role in the development of the project through the opening of 26 Dragonville in 1982 and 24 and 25 Dragonville in 1984. During 1984 and 1985 the implications of a change from volunteer residential workers to paid non-residential workers were discussed. This course of action was agreed upon in principle and the funding secured to implement this radical change which was essential if the project was to meet the ever increasing demands made upon it.

The beginning of 1986 saw a change in the type of involvement I had with the residents and the volunteers who were still necessary with one paid non-residential member of staff. With a less intense and more impersonal contact with the every day life of the project I found that I could place a distance between myself and the project, thus creating the opportunity to reflect and write about the whole experience

The period before my own involvement in Durham Cyrenians required different research methods to the era when I was a member of the management committee.

A wealth of historical data had been kept from the early days of the project in the form of minutes of house and committee meetings and diaries kept by volunteer workers. In addition there were Durham Cyrenian and National Cyrenian Newsletters, annual reports and occasional reports written by David Constantine, the founder member of the group and lastly

many press cuttings. Interviews with residents and committee members from this time brought the written accounts to life.

Dealing with the period from 1980 onwards was more difficult because much of the available material had been written by me as executive secretary or had been produced by volunteer workers with whom I was working closely. I had been a participant for some five years before I became an "observer" in the research sense. The two roles were to raise ethical issues.

Essentially the key ethical issue for this research centred around keeping the role of researcher quite separate from that of a manager of the project. Clearly conflict of interests are possible in these circumstances. The following incident is an example of just such a dilemma which occurred during this research. A recently recruited volunteer telephoned for advice about admitting a man into 26 Dragonville. Having been given the name and details of the person concerned I was aware that according to the policy of the project he should not be admitted. However, I also wished to interview him as an ex-resident of one of the early houses and had already missed an opportunity to do this a few months earlier in the year. It was with regret, therefore, that I had to reassure the volunteer that he could not admit the person. A quite unique source of information was lost for the research, but good practice in keeping within the policy of the project had to take precedence.

On a personal level the fact that I had the trust of several ex-residents meant that I could ask them to talk to me about their experiences of homelessness. I could not avoid the feeling that this could be another form of exploitation of those on the periphery, but became convinced that

it was acceptable to collect this type of material for use in work surrounding the issue of single homelessness.

In addition I found that critical analysis and the achievement of the necessary objective distance from the subject of research more difficult for the time when I had been personally involved in comparison with the early period which I grew to know in detail from my various sources.

However, I believe that my personal knowledge of the Dragonville projects has been an additional dimension of this study, taken along with interviews with residents, ex-residents, ex-volunteer workers, committee members and ex-committee members, and has provided a unique type of anthropological insight.

As part of the research a thorough literature search was carried out and reference has also been made to current reports on the various aspects of homelessness that are regularly produced by both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

Case studies of residents were constructed from a variety of sources including house diaries, house meeting minutes and committee meeting minutes. This material has both objective and subjective elements within it. The process of extracting the information included recording the details as they were given, and using an interpretative approach in the analysis. However, as source material about the lives of single homeless people it has a strength in presenting the problem which is not found in numerical surveys. Some twenty-four interviews were carried out to gain the feelings and views of people who had been involved in the project, including past and present residents, workers and committee members. In addition interviews were carried out with National Cyrenian staff, including a founder member, with members of a general practice and a hospital

consultant, with a member of the local clergy, a member of the local authority housing department and a director of a large housing association. The material collected in the interviews provides a balance, a picture from inside and outside the project,

Further research using quantitative methods could add a different type of 'valid knowledge' about single homelessness. By contributing to the understanding of single homelessness as a social problem, all types of research work should be able to contribute to and have some affect on local and national responses to the problem.

OUTLINE OF ACCOUNT

The account is presented in two sections, the first dealing with the social issue of single homelessness on a national and local level and the history of Durham Cyrenians within this context. The second section is about the experiences of those involved in the project.

Chapter One describes single homelessness on a national scale from an historical perspective, placing the problem within the overall context of housing. In Chapters Two and Three the local housing scene is discussed, again including the historical background, (Beier, 1985) with particular reference to the problems of single people in obtaining accommodation. Alongise this the evolution of Durham Cyrenians is traced with an emphasis on the difficulties faced by the group in the light of the overall issue of single homelessness.

Chapter Four and Five examine the processes for residents, volunteer workers and management committee members in becoming part of the project. The experiences of living in the project and being involved in it are described in Chapter Six, followed in Chapter Seven by an examination of the issues raised for the three groups concerned. Chapter Eight looks at

the final stage of involvement, that of leaving the project, how this is achieved and what affect it has on those left behind and the project as a whole. Chapter Nine draws together the conclusions of this study and highlights issues touched upon which are possible areas for further research.

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## SECTION ONE: CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

A small local provision for the single homeless has to be set within the national and local context in which it exists. The issue of single homelessness is a national one and is a problem fast reaching crisis proportions.

Latest reports show an increase in both the scale and extent of single homelessness with a particularly rapid rise in the numbers of young people without accommodation. (Shelter, 1987). It is argued, therefore, that the long term solution to single homelessness must be at the national level, in terms of political action, to give single people a statutory right to decent housing at a price they can afford. The social and economic problems of the 1980's will remain and affect the provision of housing for the single homeless as they affect all social and welfare provision. However, if no basic political right is accorded the single homeless it is unlikely that any action will be taken to increase provision.

In broad terms the local response to single homelessness reflects the national scene. With many calls on limited and shrinking resources local government has to fulfil statutory obligations in the provision of services to the community. The vast majority of single homeless people have no statutory right to accommodation and are, therefore, denied access to local authority resources.

It is within this setting that the voluntary sector plays a role. The voluntary sector has for many years played a peripheral part in providing social services absent from the state and informal networks of provision. However, the unplanned geographical distribution of voluntary sector provision, along with its variable quality, both arising from the very fact

that it is voluntary, has led to an ad hoc development of provision, often with scant regard to either what is needed or what other provision, statutory or voluntary, may be available (Brenton, 1985).

In Chapter 1 the national context of single homelessness is described looking at the social, economic and political aspects of the issue. Both the historical and current state of affairs are focussed upon through the conceptual analysis which underlies this account, that of the relationship between mainstream and peripheral groups in society.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide an account of the establishing and maintaining small scale provision for the single homeless within a local setting which is moulded, shaped and influenced by what is happening nationally.

The overall account of single homelessness and the efforts of Durham Cyrenians to establish a project to provide accommodation and support for a small number of this group clearly demonstrates that the peripheral nature of the single homeless is maintained at the national level and is reflected locally.

This understanding of the nature of mainstream peripheral relationships is extended to the second section of this account which describes and examines the life and times of the project and how the groups involved interact in running and living in the project.

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## CHAPTER 1 - NATIONAL CONTEXT

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide a broad picture of single homelessness in British society in terms of the current situation and how it developed. In looking at the economic, social and political dimensions of single homelessness in the late twentieth century, patterns of causes and responses to the problem can be identified and analysed within the conceptual framework of mainstream and peripheral society. For example, the process of marginalisation has been evident in the migration of workers and state control of this; poverty caused by economic recession and state response to it.

This overview of single homelessness sets the scene for the substantive part of this study, a detailed account of a small voluntary project providing accommodation for single homeless people which illustrates in a very specific way the analysis and conclusions of this chapter.

The underlying issue at both the national and local level is the control of the allocation and distribution of resources, in this case that of access to housing. The centre has control and defines the situation for all groups in society, some of whom experience social, economic and political forces moving them further from the centre. Some move from the centre to the periphery while others are forced to the periphery of the peripheral sphere of society. In housing terms these theoretical zones are the property owning sector, the renting sector and the homeless.

A comparison of government expenditure on housing benefit and tax relief on mortgage interest illustrates how the interests of mainstream society are served with disregard to the needs of others in society. Housing benefit expenditure increased from £1356m in 1979/80 to £2466m in

1985/6 while that on tax relief on mortgages increased from £2384m to £3666m over the same period (CHAR 1985/6 Annual Report, p3). Thus those centrally situated in the housing market had this position reinforced, while those just retaining a hold in the same market had less assistance and were likely to be forced out of the market altogether.

This process of marginalisation is experienced by the single homeless as a group within society and by members of the group as individuals in many ways and in many circumstances. The national picture described in this chapter provides the background for the story of the local project and the people that use it, but always the essential factor is control of resources.

## THE PROBLEM OF COUNTING THE SINGLE HOMELESS

Single homelessness is a problem of a complex nature in that the causes of the problem are as varied as the responses and remedies offered as solutions. The single homeless are a heterogeneous group coming from all social classes, all age groups, both genders, different races, religious and occupational groups.

For many of the single homeless, 80%, the problem is one of lack of suitable available accommodation that they can afford (Department of Environment, 1982). This fact is both fundamental and central to an understanding of the problem of single homelessness and the solutions to it. Attention was drawn to the social, economic and political dimensions of single homelessness. This is a move away from the ideology of individual pathology which locates the cause and solution of the problem within the single homeless themselves thus removing responsibility for action from the state.

While not denying that approximately one fifth of the single homeless have multiple problems, the fact that the majority have one problem, the need for accommodation, places the issue of single homelessness in a new perspective which sees the solution in social, economic and political terms, that is, single people have a need for independent accommodation in the same way as families. They should have a right to be able to afford a home, and should have the same rights in law as other members of society.

For the remaining twenty per cent of single homeless people there are other problems - economic, social, health or emotional - sometimes preceding the homelessness, sometimes contributing to it. Once again given an understanding of the problem attempts can be made to find appropriate solutions. These solutions will be very different to the majority offered at present which include large institutions such as Resettlement Units which replaced the casual ward of the workhouse while retaining many of the characteristics of the former and achieve a resettlement rate of somewhere around 2%, hostels of various sizes run by voluntary organisations underfunded by central government and barely accountable to anyone and commercial enterprises run on bed and breakfast lines and accountable to no one although funded by central government.

Definitive national figures of single homelessness are not available. Thus the size of the problem has to be estimated from a number of sources, a method which can only provide an incomplete and inaccurate picture of the scale and extent of single homelessness. Official records from Resettlement Units, from the voluntary sector - projects providing accommodation and from campaigning organisations, from housing aid and advice centres, from local authority housing departments all indicate that this problem exists. However, they fail to have the impact of a complete

national figure. The diversity of these sources reflects the many faceted problem of single homelessness, and at best only provide a rough guide to the numbers involved and an incomplete picture of who is single and homeless and why.

The lack of hard statistics relating to single homelessness could be said to be inherent in the peripheral status that characterises this ever-growing section of society. Evidence of increasing numbers comes from the increasing pressure felt by projects around the country which can only provide for a small proportion of the people who ask for help. (Shelter 1987) As a group that has never had a legal right to a permanent home, a position confirmed in the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act and reaffirmed in the 1985 Housing Act (Section 3), the process of marginalisation has maintained the position of the single homeless as a peripheral group and hence a lack of mainstream interest in the size or extent of the problem, except in areas where the issue touches mainstream society. This may be in a social context, for example, the single homeless sleeping on the streets and the embankment throughout the year; in an economic context, for example, when the cost of containing the problem exceeds the amount government is prepared to spend, so reductions have to be made or in a political context when those involved become strong and organised enough to bring pressure to bear on mainstream society.

**AN ATTEMPT TO COUNT THE YOUNG SINGLE HOMELESS**

Over the past few years there have been various attempts made in collecting information about single homeless people. These have been based on a particular locality in connection with establishing a project such as a hostel, for example, Richmond on Thames Group; on a particular group such as the mentally ill in connection with provision under the 'special needs

initiative' which made funds available through the Housing Corporation to provide for vulnerable groups of people. and research projects such as the Department of Environment funded survey which produced the report Single and Homeless (1982) and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Social Survey Division's report on Who Would Prefer Separate Accommodation? (1986).

This section outlines the problems of research into single homelessness which were encountered by the SHELTER project investigating youth homelessness. Although concentrating on a specific group of the single homeless, the experience of this research represents that of any research project about single homelessness and provides insight into the problems.

Identifying and acknowledging the difficulties of collecting information about single homelessness has not prevented SHELTER, a national organisation campaigning on behalf of homeless people, from attempting to compile a comprehensive report on the scale and extent of youth homelessness in the UK.

The sources of evidence about the numbers and distribution of youth homelessness were threefold. Firstly, official records such as national studies and local authority housing department records; secondly, numerous local studies and reports produced by voluntary groups and thirdly, information collected about the effects of the government's board and lodging regulations introduced in April 1985. Taken together these sources provide a clear indication of increasing numbers of young homeless people which amounts to a national problem.

The SHELTER report states "There has been no comprehensive government study in Britain of the extent of youth homelessness and the reasons why young people become homeless." This is also true for all categories of

single homeless. In 1975 Yorkshire Television produced a documentary "Johnny Go Home" describing the problems of young homeless people in London. The Department of Health and Social Security responded to this by establishing a working party to investigate the issues raised. Under resourced the Working Party was not able to produce a comprehensive report, but did recommend that policies affecting young people should have a joint approach from government, a recommendation not acted upon (Shelter, 1987).

Here is a clear illustration of the relationship between mainstream and peripheral society, where pressure is strong enough to force some response from the government, which takes the form of funding a report about the scandal, but not allocating resources to deal with the issue. This situation in itself contributes to the process of marginalisation for the young homeless because the government appears to have taken action while in fact it has not.

The British Youth Council published a report three years after the DHSS report, identifying the social and economic causes of the increasing youth homelessness (Shelter, 1987). The four main reasons identified then - lack of preparation for independent living, increased youth unemployment, the shortage of housing and the problem of racial discrimination - have been found to be central in national and local studies right up until the present day.

The DOE report on single homeless published in 1982 stated that the young were over represented in the single homeless population and that the trend was for very young people (under 19) to become homeless. Reasons identified were the break up of the family home, family disputes and having been in one or more institution, often a children's home, all of which are cited as factors in youth homelessness in later studies, for example, a

NACRO report and in 1984 a report by the House of Commons Social Services Select Committee which highlighted the probable 'loneliness, homelessness and a sense of inadequacy' of children leaving care (Hansard, 9884).

The SHELTER report attributes the increase in the use of board and lodging accommodation to the lack of government action on the issue of youth homelessness over the ten years as described here. This has led in turn to the new supplementary benefit regulations which have been introduced by the government to control the expenditure on what is, in effect, youth homelessness. This is a further example of the process of marginalisation where the centre defines the needs of the periphery in terms of its own interests and not in terms of the needs or interests of the peripheral group, in this case, the young homeless.

There are two fundamental drawbacks to the information that is collected by central government on homelessness. The first is that only those homeless people who are covered by legislation are recorded. This excludes the majority of single homeless. Secondly, the age of those receiving assistance is not recorded, thus making it impossible to identify particular age groups amongst the single homeless.

In 1985 SHELTER tried a different method of collecting information about the scale and extent of youth homelessness. All local authority housing departments in England and Wales were approached for figures relating to assistance given to homeless people since December 1977 when the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act came into force, placing an obligation on them to provide such help. With less than 40% response, only eight out of over 400 housing departments providing complete statistics for each year and explanations including that no response was possible because there was

no information provides yet further evidence of the marginal status of the single homeless, even compared with homeless families about which there are statistics available.

A further factor emerging from the SHELTER survey was that those local authorities replying recognised that their figures were underestimates. This was because the young homeless had such low expectations of receiving assistance from the local authority, frequently confirmed during an initial interview, that no application was made. Yet a further stage in the process of marginalisation for this peripheral group who will not appear in the two most commonly used indicators of housing need, 'waiting lists' and households registered as homeless under the 1977 Act.

By projecting from the various sources of information available SHELTER estimate that there were 80,000 young homeless people in 1985 in Britain.

Lack of interest and the low level of monitoring by local and central government suppresses the evidence about youth homelessness, thus causing it to be a 'non-issue' is how SHELTER view the present state of affairs. In terms of mainstream peripheral relationships this is an instance of the centre defining the situation in accordance with its own interests and using the power of the centre to enforce this definition generally and specifically for the peripheral group, the young homeless.

**WHO ARE THE SINGLE HOMELESS?**

People become homeless through social, economic and political forces. These determine both societal factors such as social class, access to the housing market, access to the educational and employment markets, as well as influencing personal factors such as family background, age, gender, marital status, income, health and occupation, all of which are to a great

extent themselves socially determined and contribute to people becoming homeless.

Changes in social policy, economic situations and of governments in power are all forces which activate the process of marginalisation. For example, the social acceptance of divorce, followed by relaxed legislation are social and political forces leading to an increase in the number of single households requiring accommodation.

Economic recession results in the loss of jobs, with the resulting inability to pay for existing accommodation and thus homelessness. The 1986 Social Security Act has reduced the entitlement of unemployed mortgage holders to half the interest on the loan for the first four months of benefit, a move which will force many home owners, some of whom will be single, into homelessness. For the single people in this situation the process of marginalisation continues in that having lost their status of owner occupier they have no legal right to be rehoused by the local authority housing department. The options for the single person in this position are limited to those of the periphery of the housing market, the private rented sector, shared accommodation with friends which creates concealed households, bed and breakfast accommodation, hostels or 'sleeping rough'.

At the individual level the process of marginalisation begins, for example, when family circumstances change. For example, when two people marry for the second time which may result in overcrowding and emotional tension. Some of the teenage children may be forced to leave home and join the ranks of the single homeless. A divorced man will frequently find himself homeless because the family house is retained by the ex-wife and children. Some occupations have a marginalising effect in that people work

away from the parental home and never establish a home of their own, with the result that on retirement they are homeless. Many ex-servicemen and merchant seamen experience this process of marginalisation which takes them from the centre to the periphery.

The awareness and recognition that becoming homeless is a social process and not an issue of personal inadequacy provides the context for identifying the extent of single homelessness. Geographically there are single homeless concentrated in large urban areas, with London having the greatest number, some 30.000 in 1987; but the single homeless are present in every town and city in the UK, estimated at 70.000, giving a total of 100,000 (IYSH, 1987).

There are three to four more times men than women recorded as single and homeless, with two thirds of the women aged between 16 and 29, but this estimate has several flaws. Firstly, the provision for single women throughout the country is very sparse indeed, so the recorded use will be at the same level. Secondly, only in the past decade has the problem of homeless women been addressed because it has been a concealed problem dealt with by women in unacceptable ways, for example, entering and remaining in relationships for the sake of accommodation. The extent and seriousness of homelessness for single women is now only just becoming apparent.

This is not to deny that there is an ever increasing number of single homeless men of all ages for whom there is very limited provision, much of which, in the form of large hostels and resettlement units, previously casual wards of the workhouse, is designated for closure by 1988.

The age range of the population of single homeless extends from 16 to very old, with the numbers of young people rising dramatically during the 1980's as shown in the SHELTER report (1987) discussed above.

Information relating to social and medical problems experienced by the single homeless was collected and analysed for the Single and Homeless report, which stressed that there was only a minority of the single homeless with such problems. Those under 30 had few problems, but if any they were of a social nature such as poor family relationships. The intermediate age group, 30 to 49 reported more mental illness and specific problems such as alcoholism while the older group, over 50 had more physical illness and disability.

These overall characteristics were affected by other factors. The period of homelessness, unemployment or being employed in certain industries, for example, catering, all exacerbate social and medical problems. In each age group women had fewer social and medical problems than men.

The report points out that social and medical problems are likely to be more serious for the homeless, whether living in accommodation of a low standard or sleeping rough. The fact that this same group of people will have less access to professional help and treatment is another dimension in the process of marginalisation which reinforces the peripheral status of the single homeless.

THE HOUSING MARKET

During the twentieth century there have been three major trends in the housing market. Firstly, owner occupation has become the most common form of tenure, with over 60% of the housing stock being in this sector of the market. Secondly, since the turn of the century the private rented sector

has declined dramatically from providing 90% to 8% of available accommodation. Thirdly, the public rented sector came into being in the 1920's in the form of local authority provision and was added to in the 1960's and 70's by housing association accommodation.

These major changes in the housing market have had an enormous effect on what accommodation is available to people in British society and have generally provided a wider choice. However, for single people, numbering over eight million in 1986, the changes so beneficial to the majority have all contributed to and intensified the problem of obtaining secure accommodation.

In the first instance owner occupation is less likely to be available to single people with one income. This is especially so for women with an average wage of two thirds that of men. Surveys have established that only around one fifth of single people would prefer this option if it were available to them. (Singled Out, 1985)

The private rented sector was the main source of accommodation for the majority of single people and the decline of this sector has had serious consequences for them. Between 1979 and 1987 the stock of houses and flats in the private rented sector has fallen from two million to one and a half million, thus contributing considerably to the rise in the numbers of single homeless. The process of marginalisation comes into operation in this now peripheral sector of the housing market in that the most vulnerable such as the unemployed and others on social security benefits are excluded from it because they are unable to provide large deposits and pay the high rents resulting from high demand and a decreasing supply.

Unfortunately the expansion of the public rented sector has not been able to provide a viable alternative for the majority of single people for

several reasons. Firstly, the type of provision in this sector has traditionally been for families. Secondly, local authority lettings policies have excluded single people on various counts, such as age restrictions, local connections conditions and waiting list restrictions (CHAR,1985). Thirdly, since the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act came into force, the majoirty of single people of working age do not have a legal right to be housed which in effect forces single people further into the periphery of the housing market, the shadowy area of temporary accommodation - bed and breakfast hotels, hostels, night shelters and eventually the streets.

This outline of the housing market is a further illustration that the problem of single homelessness is rooted in social change, economic development and political will. The single homeless as a group have been experiencing the process of marginalisation, and within that group there is also a periphery to which the least able to cope find themselves.

The final section of this overview of single homelessness discusses the response of the state to the problem, focussing on three current aspects of the issue, the government board and lodgings regulations introduced in April 1985, the proposal to close the DHSS resettlement units and the 'care in the community' initiative.

## STATE RESPONSE TO SINGLE HOMELESSNESS

Containment, control or callous indifference have been the responses made by the state to single homelessness over history. Which response depended upon how serious the problem was in relation to mainstream society. This was assessed in terms of how great a threat to law and order, how great was the nuisance level or how great the cost to the state. Little consideration was given to the needs of the single homeless whose

interests, as a powerless peripheral group, could safely be ignored by the centre.

The state response to the issue of single homelessness during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was to criminalise the condition and punish those who were deemed from as early as 1300 as wantonly vagrant and perceived as a threat to society and the status quo. In October 1986 the House of Lords discussed making trespass a criminal offence to ensure that such groups as the Peace Convoy moving around south west England could be controlled and punished if necessary. Legislation which affects all groups in society is under the control of the mainstream and is used to serve the interests of the centre in the most ruthless manner.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the large numbers of homeless young, able-bodied unemployed were seen as a threat to social order and thus as a problem which required a state response. This took two forms, to increase the practice of impressment to provide a source of men for the many wars taking place between 1688 and 1756, and to encourage emigration to the colonies, especially to America from 1660 and 1700. These actions could certainly be said to serve the interests of the government of the time, removing the perceived threat to mainstream society at the same time as saving what little had been spent on the relief of poverty. (Beier, 1985)

In January 1987 the Tory government announced that funds would be released to voluntary organisations working with the single homeless on the streets of British cities and towns to enable them to make extra provision during the period of sub-zero temperatures. This decision was taken although this government is generally known to be unsympathetic to the

single homeless, for example, the denial of legal right of the single to accommodation has been confirmed in the 1985 Housing Act (Section

This action has to be seen in the light of other recent actions of this government and in terms of its interests in the near future, because it is not possible to view one small gesture in isolation if the overall response to single homelessness is to be understood.

Representatives of two voluntary organisations working with the single homeless (Crisis at Christmas and St. Mungo's) both commented that people were living on the streets, sleeping in cardboard boxes under the arches of famous bridges and on park benches all year round. This situation had not led to concern great enough to persuade the government to fund permanent accommodation for the single homeless which would alleviate the problem. Nor, indeed, did the arctic conditions of January 1987. The offer was of a peripheral nature. Made to the voluntary sector, itself peripheral within the welfare state, providing as it does marginal relief to the peripheral group of the single homeless.

The truth of this response is that it is in the interests of the government not to have people dying on the streets in 1987, the United Nations International Year of Shelter for the Homeless and probably that of the next General Election. If there were deaths of people living on the streets the issue of single homelessness would become one of central concern and would have to be addressed as such and not marginalised as a one-off crisis to be met by the granting of emergency funds.

Thus, state responses, even when given the appearance of being in the interests of the peripheral group, can be seen in reality as serving the interests of the mainstream and contributing to the process of marginalisation which denies any possibility of the single homeless

defining the situation for themselves whether it be to go to a new country at the command of the state or to choose between a night shelter or the open air in the late twentieth century.

The extent of the marginalisation of the single homeless in the 1980's is based on the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, legislation which defined the peripheral nature of the problem of single homelessness by excluding all but the most vulnerable of the single homeless from any but the most marginal of assistance in meeting housing needs.

The prevailing attitude towards the single homeless was captured in the following comment by Mr. Silverman, M.P., in the debate on 18 February 1977 when the Housing (Homeless Persons) Bill was presented to the House of Commons:

> "The Bill will do little for single people - what I call the flotsam and jetsam of the homeless - whom we see in various places in London, underneath the arches ..... Something should be done to assist the organisations which help these people. The Bill will not provide any special provision for them, because they can hardly be considered as priority cases though they are pathetic people." (Hansard, Vol 926, page 946)

During the presentation of the Bill it became clear that the objective of the proposed legislation was to consolidate the existing legislation. As Mr. George Rodgers stated:

> "I find it astonishing that there is no specific legislation to deal with the issue of homelessness, strangely we have endeavoured to meet the problem with a hotch-potch of circulars, the Poor Law, the Vagrancy Act and the National Assistance Act. The joint circular .. No. 18/74 - issued by the Department of the Environment and entitled "Homelessness" made many useful and helpful recommendations, each of which was widely ignored or totally rejected by local authorities." (Hansard, Vol 926, page 950)

This would provide a framework for dealing with homelessness by moving the responsibility from social services departments to local authority housing departments without increasing the public expenditure on housing.

During the debate there were several references to the issue of single homelessness which demonstrated an awareness of the problem as a social issue which required a social policy if it were to be addressed in a positive way:

> "The development of the use of bed and breakfast accommodation to house those who are temporarily homeless has become a singularly unfortunate policy."

> "The situation of the single homeless person is one for which too little concern has been shown, and the need for action is at its greatest for those at the point of discharge from prison and psychiatric hospitals ..." (Mr. Irving).

> "The number of single people seeking to live in cheap hostel accommodation has increased dramatically over recent years, and during the same period the availability of such accommodation has declined."

> "There are many fallacies about homeless people. In truth the vast majority are neither criminals or layabouts, but simply the victims of harsh circumstances. A fair number are homeless because they have experienced domestic friction. Most are poor, and some are inadequate, but society itself is surely woefully inadequate if it is to penalise people if they are not able to cope with domestic disaster, or because they lack wealth and substance." (Mr. Rodgers)

> "... Centrepoint, which also deals with young homeless, made 7,725 admissions in 1974, compared with 5,328 in 1973.

> So it goes on.

> "The figures show that there was a remarkable jump in the number of young people seeking homes after the passing of the Rent Act 1974, ... natural tenants of furnished accommodation, the mobile young moving into cities for their first jobs." (Mr. George CunninghamM.M.P., Hansard, Vol 926, page 946))

Even those with an involvement in the problem continue to marginalise the single homeless, for example, by locating the solutions in the voluntary sector:

> "One question ... concerns the single homeless and our continuing inability to do much to help them, even within the terms of this Bill, because clearly they do not represent a high priority. However, I hope we shall look at some categories of the single homeless to see if we can do more to help them. ... I am only too well aware of the rate at which the problem is growing and how it is affecting young people.
>
> "I express the hope that the provisions of Clause 8 regarding financial support for the voluntary agencies will be applied to the needs of the single homeless." (Mr. Scott, M.P., Hansard, Vol 926, page 950))

This recognition of young homelessness and homelessness for those leaving institutions such as large psychiatric hospitals as major problems in 1977, without the introduction of measures backed up with resources to deal with them indicates the low priority given to single homelessness, and crucially, the lack of political will to demarginalise this peripheral group.

Clearly the distinction between the 'deserving poor' and the 'undeserving poor', first made during the transition from the feudal to the capitalist economic system, was confirmed with protection for the weak and vulnerable, the old and sick, but none for the majority of single homeless of working age and in good health.

The effect of the 1977 Act has been that the limited resources allocated to housing for the single have been directed into the areas of 'special needs', that is, sheltered accommodation for the elderly, the handicapped and others with 'special needs'.

The vast majority of the single homeless have received assistance in the form of advice from local authority housing departments. The information given is that they are eligible to be placed on the waiting list

for accommodation but the waiting period will be very long or that they are not eligible for council accommodation at all.. Social, economic and political forces yet again further marginalised the majority of single homeless in that they have no statutory right to public sector accommodation and they cannot afford to buy or rent decent housing in the private section. (CHAR, 1985)

Two recent specific examples of how the state has responded to single homelessness will be described and discussed here to illustrate how the centre controls and allocates resources in terms of how the problem is perceived as affecting mainstream society with slight regard to what the problem means for the people affected by it and how powerless they are as a peripheral group to influence the decision making process.

First, board and lodgings allowances and the DHSS regulations which control them, an issue which affects the large and growing number of young single homeless in that the government introduced in April 1985 a new set of regulations which radically altered the position of those aged under 26, thus forcing them further towards the periphery of society.

The thrust of the new regulations was three-fold. To limit the amount of the allowance for those still entitled to it, to limit the numbers entitled to it, and to limit the length of entitlement to benefit to between two and eight weeks in any one DHSS area. These new regulations represented substantial savings to the state as well as a means of controlling the young single homeless who were being seen by the mainstream as having too much freedom of choice and should be forced back to the parental home.

The consequences of the new regulations for the young single homeless were devastating, with 63,400 claimants aged 16 - 25 affected in the U.K

between 29 April and 30 July 1985 (CHAR 1985/6 Annual Report). Many had to leave accommodation which they regarded as home and find new accommodation in a new area. Some could not face the problems of the new situation and committed suicide. Others had to return to the parental home which had been left because of difficult conditions ranging from overcrowding to physical and sexual abuse. This option was not available to 68% of young people in a survey carried out by West End Coordinated Voluntary Services published in July 1986 (Enforced Vagrancy). Around 15% of this group of young people had been in care and could not take the advice of the government to return to the parental home.

A further dimension to the state action in attempting to control single homelessness, both as a social problem and a state expenditure problem, was the illegal introduction of the new board and lodging regulations , a judgement made in the High Court in July 1985 in the Cotton appeal case which challenged the legality of the new regulations.

A revised set of regulations were introduced and ratified in December 1985, although the DHSS appeal against the July High Court ruling was dismissed. However, a new category of 'Secretary of State discretion' was introduced in November by the Statutory Instruments Committee, presumably as a means of ensuring that full power remained with the state in future.

The attempt to disregard even the basic rights of the single homeless characterises the nature of the relationship between mainstream society and the periphery and demonstrates the forces that are involved in the process of marginalisation.

However, in the particular case of the board and lodging regulations counter forces can be identified. Voluntary organisations working on behalf of the single homeless mounted a campaign against the government. As well

as using their own position as pressure groups, the voluntary organisations such as CHAR, SHELTER and NACRO, united the usually fragmented group of young homeless, brought them in from the isolation that develops as an aspect of becoming marginal thus creating an effective opposition from within the periphery to fight the state on this issue.

Second, the proposed closure of the twenty two resettlement units, the direct access emergency accommodation provided for the single homeless by the state, administered by the DHSS, was announced early in 1985. The resettlement units, direct descendants of the casual ward - the spike - of the work house have traditionally been used by an older group of single homeless, many moving around the country in search of casual work in the construction and catering industries. During the 1980's people discharged from the large psychiatric hospitals as wards closed under the 'Care in the Community' initiative have been forced to use resettlement units because replacement accommodation within the community was not available for them. The proposed closures, eight by 1988, would thus affect groups of single homeless on the edge of peripheral society itself.

The Camberwell Resettlement Unit in London was already in the process of closure and a programme of replacement provision was underway. The issues arising from the Camberwell experience were taken up on a national scale in relation to the complete closure programme and illustrate the power struggle between the centre and the periphery, represented in this case by DHSS and the voluntary groups concerned with single homelessness.

Fundamentally the issue at stake was once again that of the denial of the basic statutory right to suitable, decent accommodation for all members of society, which was manifested in the state's proposal to hand over the responsibility for direct access emergency accommodation to the voluntary

sector. Leaving aside whether this would be practical or not, this proposal can be seen as an attempt to disregard the spirit and the letter of the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act which places an obligation of local authority housing departments to provide housing and housing assistance.

Further, the manner in which the matter proceeded under the auspices of the DHSS illustrates the unequal relationship between the centre and the periphery. The terms of the consultative process were initially dictated by the DHSS - the format of the consultation, the time period over which it would take place, who would be involved and what information, for example, financial arrangements, would be available to the voluntary sector - although the voluntary sector, through coming together over the issue, was able to alter some of these conditions. This was in the interests of the single homeless and not those of the state, which was a shift in the struggle for power with the periphery defining the situation to some extent for the centre and itself. The balance of power had been able to be changed because the state was asking something of the voluntary sector, which was thus in a position to exert counter forces and make progress on behalf of the single homeless.

An additional factor which assisted the cause of the voluntary sector was the continuing power struggle between central and local government, also in a mainstream and peripheral relationship themselves. In refusing to take responsibility for direct access emergency accommodation the voluntary sector took the opportunity of presenting an alternative strategy for this type of provision which should include the local housing department, the area health authority and the relevant social services department. The DHSS had then to include all these agencies in the consultative process which was extended both in time and depth.

From the initial proposal the DHSS had referred to a global sum of twelve million pounds, but would not provide details of capital and revenue funding to the voluntary sector. The involvement of local government was an access route to such information because it was less peripheral than the voluntary sector and could demand financial information if required to take on extra responsibilities.

It can be argued that the resettlement unit closure issue is not one about single homelessness as a social problem, but about how state expenditure can be cut in a way that is not detrimental to mainstream interests while disregarding the interests of the periphery which does not usually have the means of furthering its own interests.

## CONCLUSION

Taking an overview of single homelessness within the national context has identified several essential aspects of the issue which will be explored in more detail in the discussion of Durham Cyrenians and how this small, local project fits into the national context.

Single homelessness has been of concern to the state from as long ago as Anglo-Saxon times because it is a potential threat to the existing social order, and at various times has been perceived as an imminent threat and has been dealt with accordingly, always in a manner which serves the interests of the centre and provides no solution to the problem for the single homeless.

At the same time it is clear that over the centuries single homelessness has been a social problem resulting from demographic, economic and political changes, and not on the whole as a result of individual inadequacy.

The single homeless are a diverse group, with 80% having one problem, lack of accommodation and around 5% with serious multiple problems.

Solutions to single homelessness are in the hands of the centre which controls and allocates resources. The state must take responsibility for the problem by giving the single homeless a statutory right to housing and investing in public sector housing to create a larger and more varied housing stock. The role of the voluntary sector may be in running well-funded special projects which make provision for the minority of single homeless with special needs.

The experience of the single homeless as a peripheral group in relation to the centre is a specific one, but the lack of access to power and resources, with no right to define the situation for themselves in a way which will meet their interests, is one they share with all peripheral groups in society.

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## CHAPTER 2 - LOCAL CONTEXT 1971 - 1979

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the development of a small, local provision for the single homeless is described within the local context which has to be understood in the light of the national scene already discussed.

From the struggles of the early days when the influence of the affluent 1960's with the ideology of an alternative society still around, through the heady days of obtaining premises. The practical problems of running a long stay house only too soon dominating the scene, with the endless search for a permanent project like a spectre always in the background, while one run down property replaced another over the years. Until the early 1980's when a transition began in the project which was to allow it to respond to the changing needs of the single homeless in the most appropriate way in the new economic and political climate of this decade.

The first part of the history of Durham Cyrenians has several vital strands running through it which have much in common with the experience of any voluntary group working with the single homeless and addressing the issue of single homelessness.

First, the nature of the relationship with the local authority. Responsible as it is for housing there has to be a relationship, but establishing it in a positive way is an exercise fraught with difficulties resulting from the central position of the local authority and the peripheral status of the voluntary group, peripheral both in itself and in the group it serves, the single homeless. Fundamental to this relationship is the power of the local authority over resources which are needed by the voluntary group - information, funds, and the decision-making process.

Second, the need to establish a good relationship with the local community. A two pronged approach has to be taken. Clear information about the project must be made available to local residents, shopkeepers and those working in the vicinity of the house which will tell them about the work of the project and at the same time attack the widely held myths about the single homeless - who they are and what they are. At the same time, actions speak louder than words and the local community will more readily respond if what the group says about itself is born out in practice. That is, to all intents and purposes the Cyrenian house becomes indistinguishable from those around it and the residents likewise are seen to be unremarkable and not at all like the stereotype of the 'down and out' that lingers on within the local and wider community.

Third, attracting and retaining resources, human and financial, to maintain and develop the project is an ever present problem for a voluntary group and one which reflects the peripheral status of such a group within the voluntary sector which itself is on the periphery of the welfare state.

Finally, the relationship between the national organisation of the Cyrenian movement and the local project. The initial difficulties between the two, based on erroneous mutual expectations, were to continue throughout the early developments. They spilt over into the later period of the project, and in fact all attempts to resolve them failed in spite of considerable effort.

The public face of the project is portrayed in the hope that a greater understanding of the problems of a small, local voluntary group can be achieved. The underlying reality is that of the powerlessness of the project to define the situation in which it operates, a parallel to the

manner in which the single homeless are denied the opportunity of self determination at every stage of their career through homelessness.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Durham City is a small town, not an urban area, the first of its many contradictions. The local authority area consists of the town and many small ex-pit villages in the surrounding district. Durham has developed as the centre of a dominant service sector and is a university town. These disparate features have been significant social, economic and political forces shaping the housing situation for local residents and those who stay for limited periods of time.

The city is geographically confined to an area known as the Peninsula being within a curve of the River Wear which almost forms an ox-bow lake, thus having limited and finite space for building much of which is taken up by historic buildings. Following the national trend, the private rented sector declined, with, for example, extensive slum clearance in the early 1930's in the city centre to make way for local authority housing for families (Durham County Advertiser, May 1933). At the same time local authority housing development began in the New Durham area to rehouse people left without accommodation in the city centre.

During this period some discussion took place about the demolition and possible replacement of a large common lodging house situated in the Hilburngate area. The debate centred around whether it should be replaced, and if so should it be sited in New Durham. There was no consideration given to alternative provision for the residents of such a place and what their housing need may be.

Lack of consideration of housing need was apparent once again in the next redevelopment phase of the city centre, when the limited number of

soundly built local authority houses of Milburngate were demolished to make way for a shopping development.

The Rural District Council, which until 1972 administered the outlying areas of the present local authority area, was responsible for building council houses in all the surrounding pit villages during the time when they were prosperous. Since the 1950's and the decline of the mining industry in central district of County Durham the demand for these family-sized houses has declined, and they are inappropriate for the majority of present-day applicants for housing who are likely to be on low incomes, unemployed or single and thus not be able to afford either the cost of running a three bedroomed house or the high cost of public transport into the city centre.

The presence of the University of Durham in the city has distorted the housing market in several ways. The University itself has purchased much of the land and property in the city centre, thus restricting any possibility of housing for the local community. Enormous resources from central government have been invested in providing accommodation for students. The presence of students has affected the private rented sector in two ways; it has created a larger than normal supply for private rented accommodation, but at the same time it has set the cost of that accommodation at the going rate for students at any given time. Both these factors exclude local residents, mainly the single and childless couples, from the private rented sector, the usual access into the housing market for these groups. To add insult to injury an age restriction of forty, then twenty-one, was placed on single people applying for local authority housing, and only recently has this been lowered to eighteen. The double edged nature of this situation was that the local authority argued that the

age restriction of 21 was necessary to exclude students from applying for housing which was meant for local people.

The development of owner occupation has also been affected by the geographical, economic and social structure of the local authority district. The limited supply of property in the central area is very expensive. The private sector development on the outskirts of the city is also expensive as demand remains high as people in the service sector move in and out of the area. Once again for single people there is probably even less access to this sector of housing than the national average.

Specifically in relation to single people and the need for accommodation there are several other factors which contribute to the problem of homelessness. Although small, Durham City is the centre for a large rural population. In addition it is on the north-south route traversed by those travelling in search of fame, fortune or at least a job of some kind. For those travelling in the northern region Durham is on 'the circuit' which includes Newcastle, Sunderland, Middlesborough and sometimes down to Leeds and across to Carlisle.

The reception centre at Plawsworth, just outside Durham City, served the north from Leeds to the Scottish border and was another reason for single homeless people being in the Durham area. However, known as the 'spike' and a descendant of the casual ward of the work house, the reception centre was not a popular place to stay, especially in the early 1970's when compulsory delousing and task work were still part of the regime.

As mentioned above the presence of the University in Durham affected the availability and access of local people to the private rented sector. The social dimension of this presence was to be a central factor in the initiation of a 'community' based project. With the alternative ideologies

of the 1960's still influencing the philosophical debates of the early 1970's, there emerged a desire to move from talking about issues to doing something about them within the 'alternative framework'. This force manifested itself in a outburst of voluntary effort in every possible shape and form throughout the country in national and local voluntary organisations involved in every sphere of society from the arts, conservation and social welfare (Brenton, 1985).

In Durham the middle class of the liberal tendency is represented amongst students, academics and those belonging to the 'caring professions'. This is the class with time and energy to expend in volunteering, or put another way, has the luxury of 'affordable dissent' (Williams, 1983) because within their life style is some space not used up in everyday survival, the all consuming activity which characterises working class life and existence. This space allows for social concern to be expressed and action to be taken, about the state of society in general and about the condition of groups within it, matters which cannot be addressed by the majority who are the victims of these matters which are the concern of the minority.

One such voluntary group, Community Action Durham, concerned about homelessness, decided that there was a need for some provision for the single homeless in Durham. In February 1971 C.A.D. announced plans to establish and run a hostel near Durham City to cater for the local single homeless, many of whom were young adults. An unused vicarage was one possible property for the hostel (Sunderland Echo, 12.2.71). A Public Meeting was arranged for 3 March 1971 in Durham Town Hall to be addressed by Mr. Anton Wallich-Clifford of the Simon Community, a voluntary organisation of which he was the founder. As probation officer attached to

Bow Street Magistrates Court he had observed the futility of the measures taken against the homeless and had sought to provide an acceptable alternative in the form of community-based homes in various parts of England. The Public Meeting would attract great interest and provide an opportunity to inform the local community about the proposed project in Durham., (Durham County Advertiser, 26.2.71)

By April 1971 a Cyrenian group had been formed and had requested a draft constitution from the national organisation. Student volunteers were working with Newcastle Cyrenians on their soup run. (National Cyrenian Newsletter, April 1971). It has to be assumed that both were the outcome of a successful public meeting on 3 March. Durham Cyrenian records begin from May 1971 which is where we take up the story of the first phase of the project.

EARLY STRUGGLES

The two year period between the founding of Durham Cyrenians in the spring of 1971 and the opening of the first house, Blue Coat Cottage referred to as '81', was dominated by the search for premises. The need for a project had been established, much support had been raised and enthusiasm to 'get cracking' was at a high level.

Each committee meeting during 1971 was told about possible premises that turned out not to be available or not suitable. On 27 January 1972 'frustration' with the lack of progress was minuted, along with concern that the momentum of support would be lost if a property was not soon acquired. The January Newsletter made an appeal for property, having outlined the current position of the group - a strong group with student and local support and the support in principle of the Durham City Council resulting from a meeting with them in October 1971.

Within the first few months of the life of the project lie the roots of the problems that emerged with the development of the project which are attributable to the peripheral nature of work with the single homeless. At the same time the pressure of the need, both for the single homeless to have a house, and for the group to undertake the work it had set itself, prevented Durham Cyrenians from addressing these fundamental issues which were central to the work they were becoming involved in.

Thus, the issue of who should provide and pay for premises for the project, that is, who should be responsible for this provision, was not addressed. The acceptance of the Council's position in October 1971, support in principle but no practical resources was to colour the relationship between the local authority and the voluntary group far into the future. This situation has to be understood in terms of the process of marginalisation with the former defining the situation for itself and the project from its central, controlling position.

Further, the issue of support within the local community was avoided in its entirety. Strong, committed support existed within some sections of the community, the student body, the Church and the 'caring professions' but as things turned out in 1973 not within the local community in the wider context.

This general pattern of support and commitment was to be found in the composition of the management committee itself. Some members of the group were completely committed to the project while more peripheral members could be said to have a 'formal commitment'. Because of total commitment the project was likely to become central to those involved so deeply, while at the same time the phenomenon of dependence upon these core members developed. This was an identified pattern within small groups in the

voluntary sector such as Durham Cyrenians. The secretary, and a founder-member, Dr. David Constantine, belonged to this category as did Dr. Bill Williamson who became involved a little later.

The advantage of this is that the charismatic force of such individuals carries the group through difficult and depressing periods. The disadvantage is that an exclusiveness develops which prevents others from contributing to the work. Dependence upon individuals decreases and becomes less influential in larger groups which have an existence of their own. Many voluntary groups have a charismatic founder member, for example, Des Wilson of Shelter in the 1960's, whose influence is far-reaching although the actual strength of the cause takes over and carries the organisation into the future.

Those committee members with a 'formal commitment' to the group often have central positions in mainstream society and can be as crucial to the organisation as the core members in that they can use 'insider influence' to make the system work for the voluntary group and enable it to undertake its work. Such was the position of Canon Maurice Simmons, chairman of Durham Cyrenians, who was able to secure the use of Blue Coat Cottage.

The essential point here is that a broad based group is more likely to succeed as a voluntary group. A diversity of members will ensure that it can gain some self-determination through contacts with mainstream society, while not losing sight of the unequal nature of this relationship. Issues relating to committee membership, joining, being in and leaving will be explored in the discussion of running a project in section two.

Several likely premises presented themselves but did not work out during 1972. Early in 1973 an almost ideal property became available. It was centrally situated which was convenient from all points of view, the

management committee, volunteer workers and residents. It was large enough to provide ample accommodation to meet the aims of the project - to provide decent accommodation for six to eight men with a fairly high measure of support from residential volunteer workers on a long-stay house basis.

The headline in the local paper "'Cyrenian Project Could Make us a Skid Row' say Allergate Folk" (Durham County Advertiser, 9.3.73) suggested that local residents did not consider St. Catherine's House at all suitable and the arguments that were put forward to support their objections, for example, "this will just ruin the environment", "I...would be terrified to go along the street" and "I.. wouldn't dare to go out if the community were established" were followed by "I know the results of these sorts of places, this street would become the City's Skid Row ... it would affect the whole town" from a male resident who claimed to have lived near a community in Manchester demonstrated the deep feelings of fear that arise from the unknown, an issue that is explored in relation to the running of the project. It became apparent that the Durham Cyrenian publicity had failed to reach or influence the local community of Durham City. It had also failed to reach many of the local councillors if the debate by the Housing Committee in considering the proposed project in St. Catherine's House is any indication of their understanding of a small project working with the single homeless. They were referred to as "an unknown quantity" and "the people who need hostel accommodation were outside Durham". However, there was support for the Durham Cyrenians project within the Council, as one member said "There is a problem in Durham.... we are here not only to rehouse people on the waiting list but also these problem people...".

This 'social reaction' is an example of the analysis of moral panic in relation to mass media discussed by Cohen:

> "A condition, episode, person or group of persons ... defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are mounted by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people.." (Cohen, 1980, p.9)

This problem faced by the project can be identified as mainstream community ensuring that its central position is maintained by excluding the periphery from its sphere, achieved in this instance by voicing 'public opinion' backed by members of the Council, combining to create a strong social force.

Funding was a further issue that was approached during this initial period in a way that contributed to the peripheral nature of the project. In September 1972 a DHSS circular was sent to all local authorities encouraging the establishment of small projects providing accommodation and support for single homeless people. Durham Cyrenians discussed this circular with Durham Social Services and gained support. However this type of mainstream funding was not obtained when the first house opened and, in fact, has not been obtained to this day. This was a case of the project defining itself as peripheral, and at this early stage of development may have been a part of the prevailing ideology of alternative ways of living in a capitalistic, materialistic society. Regardless of the philosophy behind the matter, the effect was a continuing lack of money, and efforts which could have been directed to the central work of the project had to be diverted to all kinds of fund raising.

Fund raising is a central issue for the voluntary sector as a whole. The mainstream peripheral status of an organisation within the voluntary sector at any particular time, which very much depends of the type of work and service being provided, determines how marginal an organisation is in the fund raising league.

National organisations have access to a wider appeal group than local groups, for example, MIND. However, this factor is affected by how attractive the client group is to those that make donations. Appeals for funds by organisations working with children will always attract a good response, as will those to support medical research, perhaps because within this response is an element of self-interest! Additional factors such as the season of the year, particular media coverage, royal interest and special designation such as a United Nations International Year which has assisted organisations working specifically with the disabled, women and young people in the past three years. Hopefully 1987 will bring the same benefits for the homeless as it is the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

At the local level there are further factors which affect the success or otherwise in raising funds. Some charities, for example, the NSPCC, RNIB, Oxfam and the RSPCA, have the capacity to attract middle class support, that is, the support of people with resources of time, expertise and energy to devote to fund raising as an end in itself. This leaves others, either volunteers or paid staff, to undertake the work of the organisation. Groups like Durham Cyrenians have a committee which has to undertake fund raising alongside the work which is the main objective of the group.

Fund raising was described by David Constantine as a means of asking for donations, that is, a way of making people give money. Alternatively, fund raising could be described as legitimised begging allowed so sources other than statutory ones could be tapped to provide for various disadvantaged groups within society.

In attempting to define fund raising, before exploring the subject in detail, the issue of the morality of this activity emerges and has to be addressed. At a philosophical level there is a strong argument that the state should provide the resources for all social and welfare services. This would create a complete network of provision for the whole of society at the same time as giving members of society equal rights to the services they need such as housing, health and education.

At the practical level the morality of fund raising is questionable in that as a middle class activity it provides a means of participating in dramatic, public, sometimes bizarre behaviour which is gratifying in itself under the guise of 'doing good'. Sponsorship is a case in point, with overweight people fasting to raise funds for famine relief, or the adventurous undertaking sponsored parachute jumps. At the same time any conscience about the particular way society is organised for the benefit of one group at the expense of another is considerably eased. Furthermore, the direct involvement in fund raising events of the recipients of whatever service the voluntary group provides should give rise to serious doubts as to how ethical this is, whether it is disabled people taking part in a street collection or the single homeless in a sponsored 'doss'. How fine is the line between a 'lame beggar' and a 'handicapped street collector'.

An examination of the mechanics of fund raising, how it is done, who does it and why reveals another dimension of the dynamic

mainstream/peripheral relationship where the appearance does not accurately reflect the reality of the situation.

From grand national 'extravagancer' and 'fantastical' dramas to the humble jumble sale and every imaginable and unimaginable sponsored event in between the raising of cash is only part of the story. 'Doing good' and being seen so to do is an element of maintaining a status in mainstream society which cuts across the usual social class boundaries. It includes the noble and wealthy lending a name to an organisation and giving it tax deductible sums of money and the aspiring middle class throwing 'wine and cheese' evenings for each other or being involved in the 'round table' circuit to raise funds for some sound, well-established cause such as the Marriage Guidance Council. These events, along with the sponsored events, the jumble sale and the summer fete, not forgetting the street, pub and house-to-house collections, are the province of the middle class because they are first and foremost time consuming. The altruistic nature of the organisers is called into question here because in terms of the resources used these fund raising activities are extremely ineffective in the sums they produce.

The classic example of this is the jumble sale. Here a great deal of time and energy is first spent in collecting jumble, that is, relieving the middle class of a mish mash of cast offs and misfits for sale to the poor. Then arranging storage and sorting, advertising, a venue for the sale, willing and able helpers for the day, disposal of the unsold items at the end of the day and finally the counting of the takings which never match the effort invested in the undertaking. The organising of the jumble sale also demonstrates another essential element of fund raising activity. Some form of punishment or denial is involved, which may be represented by the

amount of time devoted or the unenviable task of sorting second hand clothes or standing for hours behind a stall in the case of the jumble sale, or extreme effort or abstinence when sponsored events are involved.

Inhibitions can be thrown to the wind when fund raising is the objective and this, along with the 'one-off' nature of many events, attracts the usually self-possessed middle class to all kinds of weird and wonderful activities which transcend the routine of ordinary life and are fun in themselves.

Being on the periphery of society and not generally being middle class, fund raising has never been attractive to residents who have been asked to join in activities ranging from street collections to jumble sales while living in the Durham Cyrenian project. This unwillingness to participate and the underlying reasons for it have not been understood by the committee or volunteers running the project, illustrating the cultural differences between them and the residents.

Finally the appropriateness of the fund raising by voluntary groups has to be considered. At an international and national level money originating in unacceptable ways, for example, from investments in South Africa, could not be accepted. There is now a register of some two thousand companies who have a 'clean bill of health' in this matter. In the case of Durham Cyrenians it was felt that the problem was a local one and that the appeal for general funds should be directed at the local community. To a large extent this 'localism' guided the fund raising activity of the group together with a traditional belief in self-help shared with many other groups in the voluntary sector as part of an ethos of 'independence' from outside control.

In addition to the pressing task of searching for premises the committee was involved in formally establishing Durham Cyrenians as a registered charity and a limited company affiliated to the national Cyrenian organisation. On 23 June 1972 a public meeting was held to launch the newly constituted group, with an address given by Tom Gifford, a founder member of the National Cyrenians which had broken away from the Simon Community.

The relationship between the national organisation and Durham Cyrenians was an uneasy one from the beginning, based as it was on a 'mutual misunderstanding'. The national office, isolated from local groups, lacked the understanding that would have allowed it to respond to the needs of the local groups in a sensitive and effective way. Durham Cyrenians as a local group expected too much of what was a very small national organisation. They were, therefore, always disappointed with the services that were provided. The consequent mistrust was an underlying feature of the relationship over the years in terms of volunteer recruitment, training and support services and the campaigning or service issue. The many facets of this relationship are discussed in later chapters in which these issues are analysed.

Throughout 1972 the committee continued to publicise the work, to raise funds, having accumulated £734.84 by 31 March 1973 (Audited accounts at that date) from subscriptions, donations and proceeds of the Charity Shop in Sadder Street (Durham County Advertiser, 23 February 1973).

A soup run was operated in the city centre, held in derelict buildings twice or three times a week during the night, It was used by eight to ten different men. This contact, together with a local survey carried out in October 1972 as part of a national survey to assess the problem of

homelessness in Britain, gave Durham Cyrenians a clear picture of the most appropriate provision they could make. (Durham Cyrenian Newsletter, January 1973).

From as early as November 1971 81 Claypath had been a possible premises for the project, and throughout 1972 and into 1973 lengthy negotiations were underway to obtain the use of the property which was used by the Family Welfare Group. They were hoping to move to another office in Durham. However, Durham Cyrenians were so frustrated by the many and varied obstacles that were preventing them opening a house in Durham that they begun negotiations to run an existing hostel in Gateshead. (Cyrenian Newsletters, Feb and March 1973).

However, the endeavours of Durham Cyrenians were finally rewarded. Blue Coat Cottage, 81 Claypath, became available for use by the project from the Church of England. The whereabouts of the first Cyrenian house was a closely guarded secret at the Public Meeting in March which had been called to discuss the application to the local authority by Durham Cyrenians to take over St. Catherine's House, Allergate for the project and the strong opposition to this proposal from the local community. Along with the announcement that Durham Cyrenians were withdrawing their application, David Constantine, the secretary of the group, took the opportunity to talk about the project and the single homeless. Residents of Allergate had misconceived ideas about the Cyrenians. "In this particular project we are not seeking to provide casual accommodation for vagrants, dossers or alcoholics." "We would hope (the residents) would be indistinguishable from ordinary residents ... (they) would otherwise be homeless, friendless and hopeless." Regardless of these explanations which elicited sympathy from some quarters of the meeting, it was strongly expressed that such a project

should not be situated in a residential area, which would clearly defeat the object of the Cyrenian project as expressed by David Constantine, "We are seeking to make these people able to resume their role in society and this can't be done without practical help and involvement" (Durham County Advertiser, 16.3.73).

At this point the infinite drain that was taking place on the resources of the committee of Durham Cyrenians in terms of both time and effort can be seen. This is a significant factor in the operation of the voluntary sector as a whole and a further element in the process of marginalisation, and is intensified when the group is peripheral within the voluntary sector as is the case with those working with the single homeless.

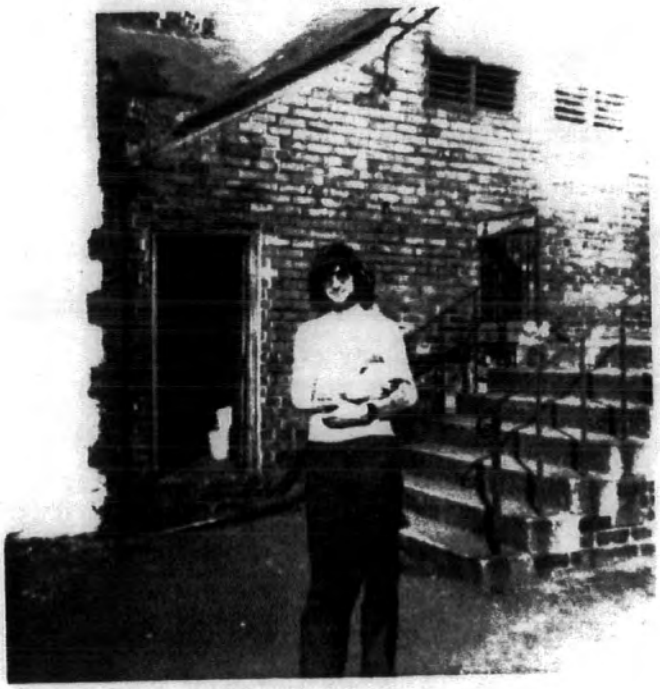
THE FIRST HOUSE

The announcement in the local press that the Durham Cyrenian house in the old Blue Coat Cottage was open saw the beginning of a new era for the group, an optimistic time indeed (Northern Echo, 11.6.73). The house itself, in disrepair, was situated in a derelict area of the town, both in the city and out of it, depending on your viewpoint. It was in the City as far as the project was concerned, conveniently sited for residents, volunteers and committee members going about the daily routine of running a Cyrenian house. Tucked away out of sight, approached through an alley way which provided both real and symbolic distance between the house and the neighbourhood, it was not seen as 'in' the City. The marginal property, not suitable for anything else, in a peripheral location, was the physical reinforcement of the peripheral status of Durham Cyrenians and the single homeless.in Durham.

However great the enthusiasm for the work, the drain on the resources within the management committee would be at least doubled as the work of

**81 Claypath**

81 Claypath



the group continued in terms of establishing a permanent project, in forging good relations within the local community, including the local authority and running the newly opened house.

The re-emergence of the ideal of communal living in the 1960's was the latest 'burst of enthusiasm' for 'an ancient and universal' alternative means of social organisation which implicitly includes a 'critique of existing social life'. (Abrams and McCulloch, 1976)

Broadly defined as a form of romantic withdrawal or 'the idea of withdrawn fellowship' choice must be an inherent element of communalism. It has been the choice for groups of artists, craftsmen and scholars during various periods of history. As the ideology which formed the cornerstone of the Cyrenian movement and of Durham Cyrenians the problem was that the founders of the 'houses' were making the choice of 'communal living' not for themselves but for future residents. As Abrams points out: "Each particular commune is indeed a peculiar bundling together and selection of some more widely shared themes of our social life." (Abrams, 1976, p.11) an observation not applicable to people thrown together because they are homeless.

Thus the principle was flawed at various levels in its application to the work of providing accommodation and support for the single homeless. Firstly, an ideology of alternative society implies choice, that of leaving conventional society and the way life is organised in it for the alternative society. In other words this choice can only be available to those that are living in mainstream society. For the single homeless as a peripheral group there is no such luxury of choice or viable alternatives. In coming to a hostel run on the Cyrenian principles of non-judgemental acceptance,

democratic decision-making and taking responsibility for running the house the usual choice for men consisted of this or sleeping rough.

However well intentioned the Cyrenian management committee was, it contributed to the process of forcing homeless people into a situation in which the mainstream controlled and defined the very principles which were intended to provide an alternative for the single homeless. This contradiction became internalised within the Cyrenian movement in general and in Durham Cyrenians where the problems of conflict which emerged from it were recognised but not addressed. The reality of the relationship between the management committee and the men, mainstream and peripheral spheres being forced into such close proximity, had to be accepted if any progress was to be made in the work of the project.

Secondly, 'community' in the ideology of alternative society suggested the presence of personal resourcefulness to provide mutual support in the business of living in a communal way. Part of the choice for those leaving mainstream society, but an imposition on those who find themselves on the periphery of society because of lack of any alternative at all.

The isolated loneliness of residents, each with an infinite, demand for support, help and attention, prevented any form of mutual support. In fact this demand was a source of many of the problems encountered in running the project, becoming as it did such a drain on human resources. Many could not cope with it. Some local volunteers and committee members as well as residential volunteer workers did not have the unlimited caring capacity that involvement in the house demanded.

Thirdly, on a more practical level, those that choose to live in a 'community' bring to it financial assets to fund the enterprise. In return those that make such a choice have a tangible stake in the 'community' and

a sense of property and ownership. Nothing is relinquished and a firm foot is kept in the mainstream where ownership is a fundamental force. For the single homeless coming into a Cyrenian community they move within the peripheral sphere owning nothing, exchanging non-ownership for non-ownership with demands from those with the best intentions.

Durham Cyrenians, in the midst of managing a project, dealing with the day to day running of the house, and the on-going work of publicity which included making a film with Newcastle Cyrenians for the Tyne Tees programme called Access, encouraging good relations in the local community and fund raising, were questioning both their principles and practices within nine months of opening 81 Claypath. All this hectic activity was reported in the newsletter of January 1974, as were the questions which ranged from the practical - running the house, dealing with referral agencies, repairs to the property - to the philosophical - the nature and purpose of the work of the group. (Durham Cyrenians Newsletter, January 1974)

A public discussion about these questions was arranged for 21 February, which would also serve to gain publicity for the project and a possible means of recruiting more supporters. The meeting was reported to be a success in terms of providing information about the work of Durham Cyrenians and in bringing to the attention of the local community the need for a permanent project to ensure that the work can continue. (Durham County Advertiser, 1.3.74)

The Annual General Meeting in July coincided with a spectacular fund raising event thought up by the two residential volunteer workers - they planned to get the fund raising effort to raise £20,000 for a permanent house off to a flying start with a sponsored tandem trip from Durham to

Faversham in Kent, calling at about twenty Cyrenian projects on the journey. This enterprise gained much publicity. The opportunity was taken to press the case of the single homeless and their needs. (Hartlepool Mail, 3.7.74 and Durham County Advertiser, 5.7.74) The adventures of the tandem riders were well reported, not least because the tandem, loaned from a couple in Durham, was stolen in Bradford, and replaced by Raleigh with two new racing bicycles. The national Cyrenian newsletter carried several stories about the trip as it progressed with comments from various groups that were visited.

Records of numbers of residents and referrals were kept from the time 81 Claypath opened and this enabled the two volunteer workers to compile a report in the summer of 1974, based on the information for March to July 1974. This not only justified the existence of the project, but illustrated that single homelessness existed and provision was almost non-existent in the area. Out of 41 referrals, mainly single men aged between 40 and 50, six were accommodated. (Appendix 1).

With the pressing need for accommodation for the single homeless ever present in Durham, it was felt to be a great opportunity when a second house became available to them in the autumn of 1974. Everyone involved in the project worked extremely hard to open the house in Oakenshaw as two of the residents of 81 Claypath reported in the national Cyrenian newsletter

> "Lost But Cared For:
> ... Such as ourselves, Gordon and Danny, who have been helped through our own personal troubles, and since the Cyrenians had another house to clean and put into order, and finding ourselves without money, and time on our hands, decided to do something it, so we went to the house in Oakenshaw and started to paint the walls upstairs and the room downstairs ...Finding ourselves tired with the work we had done daily, we decided to spend the night there ... We found our work rewarding when it was done (Cyrenian Newsletter, Oct/Nov 1974).

Gordon and Danny became the first residents at Oakenshaw when it opened officially in early December 1974, and so began the next chapter of Durham Cyrenians as they took on the running of two houses.

TWO HOUSES

During this phase of the project the peripheral status of Durham Cyrenians was consolidated in various ways. This was the consequence of the pressures and tensions faced in running a project while and at the same time working towards the acquisition and secure funding of a permanent project.

This process of marginalisation is evident in all aspects of the project in its development - its relationship with the local authority, DHSS, social services and the probation service as potential sources of funding and users of the project, its relationship to the local community, and its relationship to the national Cyrenian organisation - and can be seen to be further intensified as the task of managing two houses stretches the limited resources of the group to the extent that crisis management prevents the development of a coherent strategy for the future. This was spelled out in the report made by the secretary to the fourth AGM held in December 1976 "I think we should reflect often on what we are doing, but it is another characteristic of voluntary effort that very little time for reflection is found. Instead we makeshift from one crisis to the next. And at times of relative stability, as now, we are content to hold tight to what we have got. ...the houses are not being advanced ...not often enough the subject of productive thinking" (Annual Report, 1976).

The form and extent of social, economic and political forces that determined the events of this stage of the life of Durham Cyrenians will be

discussed in detail in this section. However, the final outcome was the closure of the Oakenshaw house in the summer of 1977 and that of 81 Claypath in the following summer with no replacement available.

This points to three things, firstly the tenuous position of peripheral organisations within the voluntary sector with the right to self-determination being denied to them in the same way it is denied to those they provide for. Secondly, to the need to identify and recognise this position. Thirdly, to place the highest priority on obtaining a secure hold on whatever resources have been obtained by means, for example, of pressuring the local authority to provide and support a permanent project, by creating acceptance within the local community and securing major funding through statutory agencies such as social services, the probation service or the local health authority.

The over riding pressure of the current crisis prevents resources being allocated for medium and long term planning and development. The second house, peripheral in every way, situated as it was several miles outside of the city, isolated from the rest of the project, 81 Claypath with its residents and volunteers, the management committee and other local volunteers, became more and more on the periphery of the project. This process of marginalisation became a permanent crisis in itself, consuming the resources of the group while remaining peripheral.

This is a central issue which has to be addressed by voluntary groups if they are to make the most effective use of their limited resources and, most importantly, provide the service they intend for, in this case, single homeless people. Durham Cyrenians were very much aware of all this and as the secretary points out the annual general meeting provides the opportunity for <u>enforced</u> reflection both of the past and to the future.

The need for replacement property continued to dominate the relationship between Durham Cyrenians and the local authority. Urgently expressed in the 1976 report to both 'the public and the responsible authorities', there had been no positive response by the time both houses closed.

Words like "survival" and "lucky" are used to describe the progress of the group with regard to funding the project, inferring that the work that was undertaken by Durham Cyrenians, although recognised as valuable by agencies such as social services, was not underwritten financially in such a way as to provide security for the project.

Running two houses used all the accumulated capital of the group, and the deficit was controlled by strict economy in running the houses as house meeting records for 1975 show.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mon 3 Feb | H.M. OKS Economy - phone calls, to be short, only with workers permission |
| Mon 24 Feb | H.M. OKS Account sheet to be put up in each house, ie for 81 and Oakenshaw |
| Sun 18 May | Finances, shops had been approached for left over food by Oakenshaw house |
| Mon 10 Nov | Richard Bateman called to tell us to economise in 81 Claypath |

Fund raising was also a high priority activity with a market stall in Bishop Auckland planned by the Oakenshaw house along with other events which are mentioned in both house meeting records and in the minutes of the committee meetings, for example

| | |
|---|---|
| Sat 22 Feb | Jumble sale, good stuff, sold about half, made £85. Good but tiring day |
| Thurs 4 Sept | Phoned FOLKUS re pub collection |

Mon 27 Oct — Cttee meeting Item 4 - Money now being lost
Item 10 - Student help forthcoming. Sponsored fast, 15 Nov.

In addition regular appeals for support and donations were made through the Durham Cyrenian Newsletter (February and October 1975) and the annual reports in which a small annual grant from Durham County Council was recorded each year. The refusal of a DHSS Schedule IV grant was reported in 1976, alongside discussion of the possibility of Home Office funding. Here the tension between raising funding and being ideologically independent was referred to. The DHSS viewed the project as offering accommodation that was 'too permanent', while the Home Office funding was stated 'not to entail any alteration of our identify', (Annual Report, 1976) the bureaucratic demands of accounting and occupancy recording would be too great.

The financial burden was reported to have decreased by the end of 1977 with the closure of the Oakenshaw house in July of that year, but clearly the peripheral nature of the funding of the project remained unaltered. This highlights the unequal relationship between the mainstream and the periphery and the force of the marginalisation process. A voluntary group was providing accommodation and support for single homeless people, work acknowledged by those in the statutory sector of the same field, but not funded in such a way that the energy and resources of the group could be devoted to their main objective and purpose. Instead continued survival was never far from being a priority, with the lack of assured self-determination a constant source of irritation.

Once established in Claypath and Oakenshaw the houses appeared to be accepted within the local communities 'after initial hostility had declined

as the houses generally had remained unobtrusive' (Durham County Advertiser, 31.10.75). Warning bells were sounded, however, when the subject of alternative premises was broached and the public reaction was 'carry on the good work, but not in my street' which summarises the response of local people when the possibility of using Churchill House in Claypath was proposed.

One further continual source of annoyance to Durham Cyrenians was the uneasy relationship they maintained with National Cyrenians. The two closely related reasons for this situation were the high cost to the local group of being affiliated to the national organisation which was necessary if the volunteer worker recruiting service was to be used. The problem was that the cost of affiliation was high while the ready supply of high calibre volunteers was far from guaranteed.

The issue was addressed towards the end of 1976 when a representative of National Cyrenians visited Durham and attended the AGM. The annual report presented to the AGM detailed the problems that Durham Cyrenians had experienced over the year with a turnover of sixteen volunteers when they could have expected one of between four and six, with great emphasis on the harm that could be done to residents in such a situation (also reported in the Durham County Advertiser, 3.12.76). The message was taken to heart and the report that went back to National Cyrenians acknowledged that local groups will strongly object if volunteers are not supplied in the quantity and quality that is required.

At this point it is worth mentioning that this was a truce in the local/national relationship. Discontent with both the type of service provided by National Cyrenians and its overall efficiency in terms of the major funding that it received, continued until 1986 when a complete

reorganisation was completed on the basis that the national organisation must respond to the needs of local groups and provide the type of service they require to undertake the work they do with the single homeless, thus creating a direct link between the experts, the voluntary group and the residents of projects.

With the closure of 81 Claypath in the summer of 1978 the pressures of day to day life of a project were removed from Durham Cyrenians. This was a blow indeed when the objective of providing accommodation and support for between twelve and then six homeless people had been achieved. Many practical difficulties had been overcome and ideological debates about the most appropriate way forward had taken place. This new situation could be seen as an opportunity for reflection and assessment and the chance to utilise all the accumulated experience and knowledge to establish the next house.

**CLOSURE: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES**

Imminent closure of 81 Claypath hung over the project for over a year, although eviction had been a possibility from the first. Like all endings that are expected, when it came, the notice to quit within two weeks was still a shock to everyone and nonetheless painful because expected. The thoughts of a committee member reflecting on the closure convey the reactions to this and the frustrations felt by the group as they were once again powerless over their own destiny. Once again, the ever-present, but for some time dormant, societal forces were awakened and mobilised to move the voluntary group further towards the periphery. As Bill Williamson wrote at the time:

> "Mr. Franks, a miner made good in the building trade,
> granted a reluctant extension of our tenancy by 5 days.
> He would not be drawn on how quickly he proposed to move
> the bulldozers in, insisting only that he wanted us out."

"But Mr. Franks is an easy scapegoat; the fault lies in our failure to find another property, to educate and to press for greater consideration for and understanding of the men. We are departing without a wimper, no capital of any kind being made from the move."

"The men accepted the news with no particular sense of urgency, no particular feeling of loss and no special worry for themselves.

"The site will be cleared and executive town houses built. Our house is to be retained and modernized. The skipper will disappear. Tucker, Johnny, Pat Henry, Bowman, Joe Hall, Joe Kirton, Peter Neil and the occasional passer through will loose their shelter. The centre of Durham,increasingly metamorphasing into an antique shop will be cleared of its undesirables. They will be replaced by another group of transients and people with empty lives, except the new lot will have more money."

"I was gentle with the builder on the phone being unable to afford, for public relations reasons and the immediate need for more time, a commodity which he controls, to be otherwise. We must leave the place in good order and with a reputation as good tenants. I have not for a long time felt so disgusted and angry. But the builder is not to blame, our laws allow him his business and our community tolerates the trampling down of those in greatest need" (Williamson, 1978).

Durham Cyrenians was still at the mercy of decisions made by others. The site of the project had been subject to the market and political forces of the City which had been exerted to move Claypath back into the centre. Now it was no longer suitable for the peripheral group providing accommodation for the single homeless.

With the embourgeoisement of Durham City, with a new emphasis on the service sector as the major source of employment to replace the dying mining industry, came the revitaliation of the City centre. Once derelict areas such as the Blue Coat School became valuable with the limited supply of land available for development and the growing demand for it. In 1977 the plan was to build accommodation for rent on the site through The Three

Rivers Housing Association, but by 1978 a private builder had acquired the site to develop it as a select 'town house' courtyard.

The vogue for city centre development was a national one in the 1970's. The experience of Durham Cyrenians in being able to obtain only marginal property for its work and then finding that the property became the subject for a process of demarginalisation, which included leaving them once more without property, was one shared by many peripheral groups in society.

Being socially peripheral is reflected in the geographically marginal locations that are available to such groups as Cyrenians. Market forces come into operation so that those with least resources can only afford property not wanted by anyone else. This particular process is an intensification of that experienced by the working class when their area of towns and cities became desirable for commercial and residential redeployment. A current example of this is the London Dockland revitalisation where local people cannot afford to buy or rent accommodation and have to move away from the area.

WITHOUT A HOUSE - AGAIN

The report presented by the secretary to the AGM in November 1978 is quoted here at length because it captured the mood so perfectly;

> "Durham Cyrenians without a house again, but with so much more than in 1973, five years of experience and an identity and self-confidence that was to ensure that they would find new premises and would continue their work. The 1977 annual report ended on an optimistic note to this effect, "our identity is at present assured. It is rooted among all the people having to do with 81 Claypath, in whatever capacity. ...though intangible it is nevertheless definite - and transferable."

The events of 1978 were to test the strength and resolve of Durham Cyrenians to the full. Once again, using the evidence available, the story

unfolds as the relationships between the voluntary group and those they have to contend with to survive and develop are examined.

First, the closure of 81 Claypath, with practical and symbolic implications which were far reaching. The closure and possible replacement focussed the spotlight on Durham Cyrenians. This was a possible turning point for the project in that it had the confidence gained from experience to demand of those responsible resources to enable the work to continue. A rare occasion for a peripheral group in dealing with the mainstream. But the attempt was not strong enough, "...we met with representatives of Durham District Council and told them what our situation was. They were, as always, cautiously sympathetic." In October, with no house, and the attempt to acquire Chuirchill House on the verge of collapse, the Council were once again approached by letter, "asking in more definite terms than ever before for more practical help". No reply had been received after six weeks and the secretary made the following point in his 1979 annual report:

> "It is perhaps time to say that by helping us the Council would be doing no more than making a start at discharging their minimum responsibilities towards the homeless in this area. (Reference to the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act.) We are not asking for any favours, we are not petitioning them for our own advantage: we are simply asking to be enabled to continue doing something socially useful, something at which we have gained a little competence. Why should our willingness and experience go to waste?" (Annual Report, 1979)

The field worker from National Cyrenians was concerned about the nature of the relationship between Durham Cyrenians and the local authority having observed the unsuccessful attempts of the group to secure help from the Council over a long period. He saw this failur as a consequence of a lack of firmness on the part of Durham Cyrenians. In fact, the group, in

it's peripheral position, was treading a very fine line in pressuring the Council and were very much aware of this. As a member of the committee explained:

> "in negotiations with the Council we could not be angry with them to get property. If (we) had been firm and said (we) were doing the local authority's work for them, on the cheap, ...(we)) would have got nowhere."

This negotiating stance of Durham Cyrenians must be seen as part of a complex network of relationships with both statutory and voluntary sector agencies using the project.

> "We were more than two years finding our first house. We cannot take so long about it again. We are more confident now. Certainly, we shall not begin again at the beginning arguing our case. We regard it as proved beyond doubt that there is a need for at least one Cyrenian house in Durham. When we had one house it was always full and when we had two they were both full. Scores of men have passed through, dozens have lived with us for long periods of time for periods of relative stability in their unstable lives. All the social services made use of us. The Police did, the hospitals did, Plawsworth Reception Centre did. We are not willing simply to vanish now. What we have done for five and a half years we can continue doing, and better, in a better house." (Annual Report, 1979).

So, the dilemma is clear. Recognised and used, but peripheral, the group has little or no power to control resources. This lies with the mainstream and must be gained by persuasion. Thus, the conflict model of dealing with the local authority was seen as inappropriate and counter-productive in these particular circumstances. This is not to say that it could not be useful in other circumstances, for example, where groups of equal status are involved in negotiations.

As referred to earlier, Durham Cyrenians had to deal with attacks as well as going into battle to obtain premises for a new project. Apart from the complicated practical problems of acquiring Churchill House, Claypath, with the assistance of North Housing Group, a large housing association, the

group faced fierce opposition from local residents. Ugly echoes of the past and very reminiscent of the campaign mounted against them when St. Catherine's House in Allergate was to be used as a Cyrenian house, but in this case more organised. However, every credit was given to the local newspaper, the Durham County Advertiser, for balanced and fair reporting (Annual Report, 1979). A full page spread (11.8.78) covered all aspects of the issue, from the local residents, from the existing residents of Churchill House and from Durham Cyrenians viewpoint, discussing the background to the present situation as well as the current problems. (Appendix 3).

Within the local opposition is an illustration of the power of the mainstream in relation to the periphery when such a conflict of interests occurs. Residents of the Claypath area engaged a solicitor to act on their behalf. They organised and sent a petition to the local M.P. Mark Hughes, who responded by writing to the Director of North Housing Group saying that local residents thought that there was sufficient provision in Durham (Plawswroth Reception Centre) for single homeless people and that the residents of 81 Claypath had been nuisances. (National Cyrenian Field Worker Report, 26.9.78.).

Political forces are at work here, for the elected representative belongs to the centre, as do the voters of the future. Those on the periphery, the single homeless, who are unlikely to be on the electoral role can be disregarded for the sake of the centre and its interests, for example, the value of property.

Normal relations had been resumed with National Cyrenians, with the outstanding half of the affiliation fee being paid. The comment was made that there were hopeful signs of improvement and "At least, the serious

efforts being made in Canterbury seemed to call for some gesture from us of solidarity and goodwill." (Annual Report, 1978)

In 1978 the following comments were made by the secretary in the Annual Report:

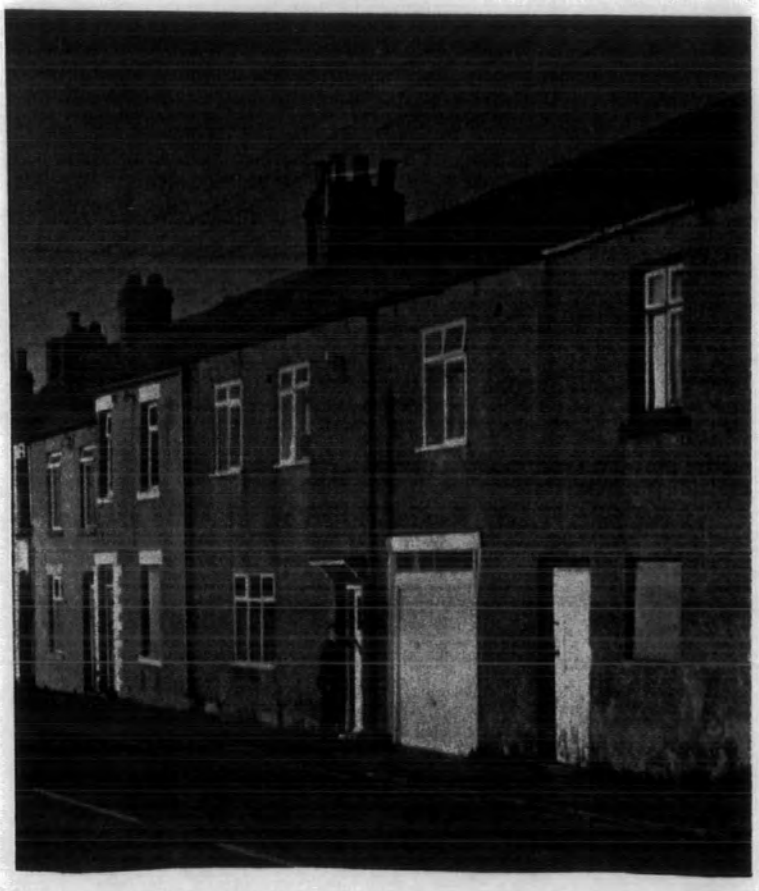
> "I know that by some it is not thought important how these men we accommodated live or die. They will make shift somehow. ... We know all that. The men we accommodated are so dispossessed that it is hard to dispossess them further. That is why it can seem to be no great matter that in August six of their number were put of of what they had as house and home. It was no more than their lives had accustomed them to expect. ... What we tried to do was raise the claim these men might make on life. We made many mistakes ... But this year I am not inclined to dwell on our mistakes nor on the difficulty of the undertaking. Rather, I am inclined to insist that the idea was and is a good one." (Annual Report, 1978)

BY COURTESY OF THE COUNCIL, 50 DRAGONVILLE

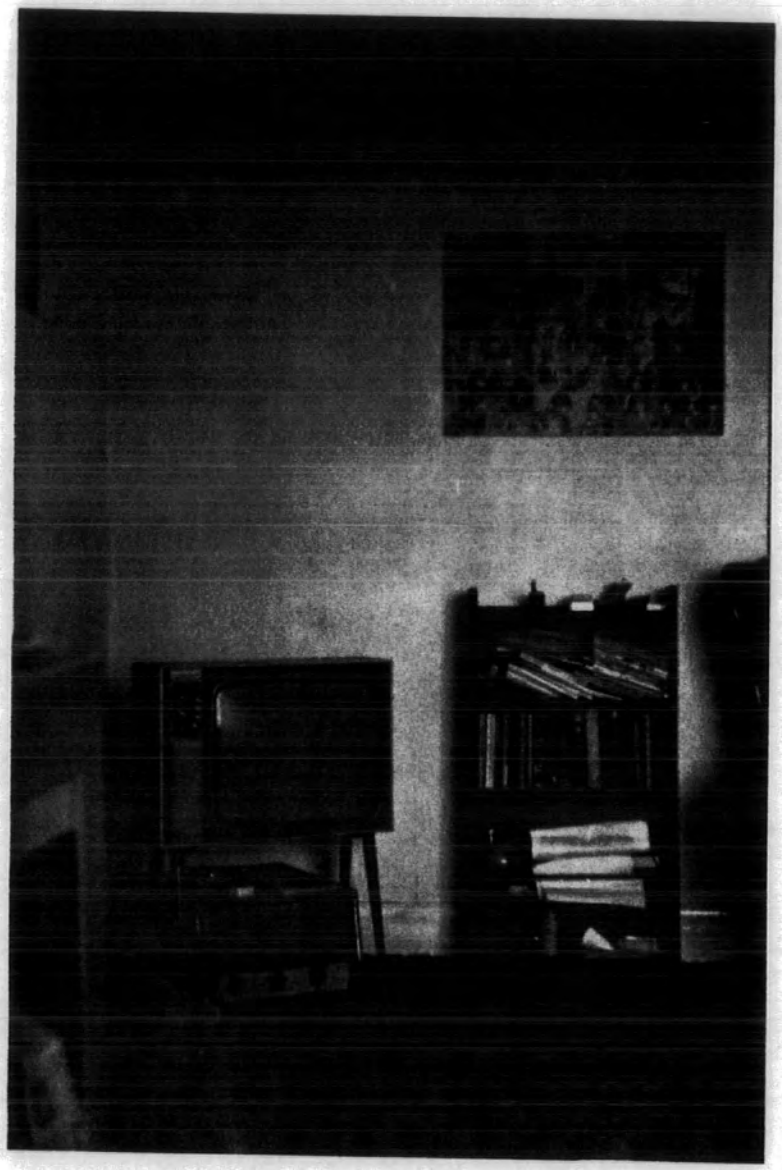
In the 1979 Annual Report the mood of the intervening period of searching for premises was captured by the secretary:

> "Month after month, at our committee meetings, we have discussed the possibilities, old and new, done our best in the meantime to follow every lead."
> This frustrating time was now at an end and the report continued:
>
> "Now, for the last two or three weeks, we have been engaged in the much more hectic, but also much more satisfying business of opening a new house." (Annual Report, 1979)

50 Dragonville



50 Dragonville



This was indeed a relief to Durham Cyrenians and hopefully to the residents who would soon move into 50 Dragonville, the new project. However, in their enthusiasm about getting underway again, even acknowledging that this house, provided by the local authority, was a step forward to gaining appropriate accommodation for the project, the experience of the past was not fully utilised. The same appeals went out for practical help and assistance, volunteers and money. This was not the best way to provide good, secure accommodation for the single homeless. Once again the peripheral status of the group was reinforced, determining the form of development into the 1980's.

Durham Cyrenians were still rooted in the past, they had not responded to changes in the field they were working in. The needs of the single homeless were changing in response to a different economic and political climate. A wide variety of resources were being made available to the voluntary sector to develop their contribution to provision. These may well not have been acceptable to the group in principle, but serious consideration should have been given to them. The field worker said in his report:

> "I came away from Durham quite depressed. They are about three years behind most other Cyrenian groups in their thinking. Who are Durham Cyrenians running a house for - the men or themselves." (National Cyrenian Field Worker Report, December 1979

This comment returns the discussion back to the pressures of operating a voluntary project, and how the present urgency which always exists, in this case, that of opening the new house as quickly as possible, prevents rational consideration of medium and long term objectives, a process which is compounded by the peripheral nature of the voluntary group and at the same time perpetuates it.

However, the political, social and economic forces were gaining strength and were beginning to affect the voluntary sector as a whole. As Durham Cyrenians embarked on running their third house these forces could not be ignored. This was the beginning of the transition for the group from its ideological past of the warmer, more friendly 1960's and early 70's into the cold, harsh reality of the 1980's.

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## CHAPTER 3 - LOCAL CONTEXT - 1980 to 1986

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the transition of Durham Cyrenians is explored as a phase in the overall development of the project. This transition was in part a response to internal pressures and in part the result of external pressures forcing major changes in the role of the voluntary sector as it became the focus of political attention as a source of significant social services provision on a low cost basis.

The transition was from a project founded on ideals and charisma run on a crisis management basis to one still based on ideals, but of a different kind; new ideals about the rights of the single homeless in this society as opposed to the original ideal of offering a home within the framework of an alternative society. The years between 1980 and 1986 were as hectic as ever, but became more directed in the attempt to secure a permanent project. Realism did not replace idealism but mediated it in preventing history repeating itself - that is a group and no project.

There are three sections: 50 Dragonville, the end of the old era; the opening and development of 24-26 Dragonville, the transition; and the move to 'professionalism', the new era of a project designed for its purpose with substantial funding for two non-residential staff to run it.

### THIRD TIME LUCKY

In many ways 50 Dragonville was a recreation of 81 Claypath, and always had an air of glancing over the shoulder about it. One year on we learn from David Constantine:

> "...we intended running Dragonville on the same basic principles as those which governed Claypath. And so we have. But the houses are rather different." (Annual Report, 1980).

The initial repair, decoration, equipping and furnishing of the run-down, vandalised Council-owned building was undertaken in the same make do and mend manner, with beg, borrow or acquire being the password of the venture.

Putting aside for the moment the physical consequences of this method of opening a house to accommodate single homeless people, the question of how appropriate it was in the 1980's has to be addressed. The field worker from National Cyrenians, on a visit to include the AGM, raised the two questions: was it in the interests of the single homeless for Durham Cyrenians first, to accept 50 Dragonville and second, should they accept the responsibility and cost of rehabilitation. (Field Worker Report, December 1979).

In their enthusiasm for the new project, and probably relief in obtaining a house after the frustrations of over a year, Durham Cyrenians gave scant attention to the words of the field worker, and he in his turn almost despaired of them.

At this time, just before the introduction of dramatic and relentless cuts in public expenditure by the Conservative government from 1982, there were several sources of funding available for setting up a new project such as 50 Dragonville. There was Home Office funding, Urban Aid funding or Housing Corporation funding of various types. Cyrenian groups around the country took advantage of these opportunities and were able to develop projects which were a response to the changing needs of the 1980's. At the same time they were able to offer accommodation of a high physical standard and the skilled support needed by many residents. It was with such possibilities in mind that the National Cyrenian field worker made his comments to Durham Cyrenians, but immersed in woodwork and jumble sales

they did not hear, It may be that they did not want to listen to proposals that contravened the idealism which had sustained them through their many upheavals over almost a decade.

Reaffiliation to National Cyrenians was made in 1980, although the relationship remained an uneasy one. Volunteers were obtained through them, It was reported in the March 1980 that Durham was the venue for a meeting with Bradford and Tyneside Cyrenians, with workers and residents sharing experiences and discussing skills they needed. Thus the isolation of the Management Committee did not extend to other members of the project, although it is not clear how much impact the information taken back to the Management committee from the joint meeting had on them.

For the many reasons mentioned Durham Cyrenians failed to develop. The experiences of the group had contributed to the process of marginalisation that they had experienced. This in turn prevented them placing demands on those who should and could support them in their work. It is impossible to believe that many of those involved were not aware of this situation, one in which they were powerless to do anything about as they continued to struggle along on a completely voluntary basis, having resources only to manage the moment and the immediate crisis, never for planning and developing for the future.

The physical condition of 50 Dragonville was poor from the outset and gradually deteriorated over time with heavy use and neglect. Always aware that this house was a temporary measure, hoping the Council or the housing association would come up with a permanent premises, Durham Cyrenians were reluctant to spend their very limited capital on it. They were not in a position to force the local authority to undertake repairs that were necessary.

However, it is reported by an ex-resident that 50 Dragonville was an improvement on the old Claypath house in that the shared bedrooms were at least bigger and people were more settled. This view was shared by David Constantine who put it this was:

> "We began with a good deal of coming and going, in the Claypath style; and there were the usual disappointments and crises which are always distressing however often they occur. But then the house settled down, men made up their minds to stay." "The house is more stable than Claypath ever was" ignores the initial stability of Claypath, while it is freely admitted ""as it turns out" that 50 Dragonville, for a while, became more independent because it was not on the route between home and work for the Committee members most closely involved in the day to day running of the project. Was a daily visit ever necessary to the Claypath project, was this question ever addressed."(Annual Report, 1980.

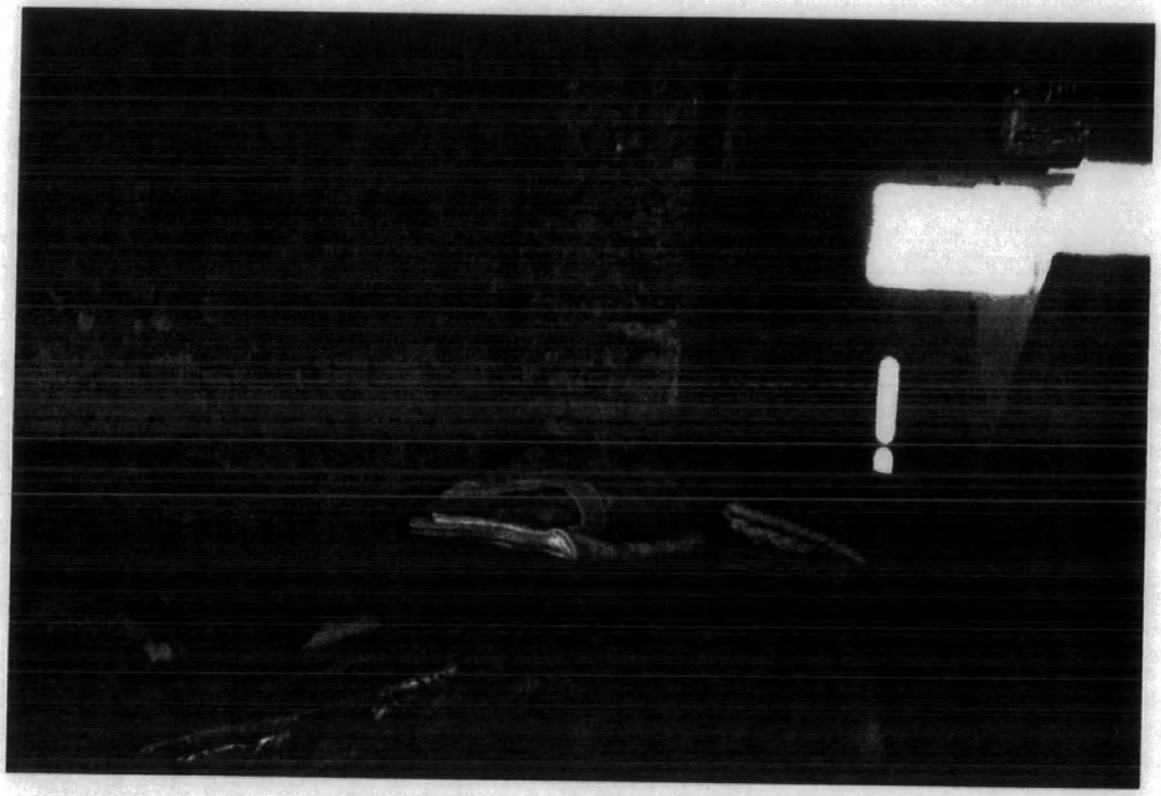
But the Claypath house too had shown early promise of this kind. Promise that had not been fulfilled then and was to prove to be false again.

Even the old set up of Claypath was copied in the Dragonville project in that the shelter found in the derelict Blue Coat School by those passing through or those not at present in the project was recreated in 'the outhouse' at the back of the project. There were strict rules stating the boundaries between current residents and non-residents which were rigorously enforced by the former group.

This need for emergency provision was identified as a direct consequence of the stability of 50 Dragonville and as such:

> "the obligation falls automatically on us to make provision for those whom, either because we have no room or because they are unsuitable, we are not accommodating." (Annual Report, 1980.

The Outhouse, 50 Dragonville



claimed David Constantine, once again illustrating both a lack of political awareness and a clearly defined objective for the group with such limited resources. Such emergency provision was never the responsibility of the group, although they may have taken it on, and statutory provision in the form of Plawsworth Reception Centre, now Resettlement Unit, was available.

As 50 Dragonville became established the majority of residents settled down in the project which in contrast to 81 Claypath became accepted within the immediate and wider local community. As an ex-resident of both houses pointed out, 50 was a quiet house, a description which did not describe the old house where drunken fights, not a few flying bricks and broken windows and the presence of the police were frequent occurrences. (Stuart).

That 50 Dragonville was one house in a terrace, not isolated, and not surrounded by dereliction which in itself attracted those sleeping rough, known and unknown, suggests there was more chance for being settled and absorbed into the local community. Evidence of this acceptance came in many forms, not least the non-controversial press coverage from 1979 which duly reported on each annual general meeting, and covered items such as the need for more aid. (Durham County Advertiser, 2.11.79 and 5.12.80).

A cynical analysis of this change from the early reports on possible projects in the City centre would note that there may be local opposition and resentment about the presence of a Cyrenian house. But Dragonville being a working class area, has a local community that is marginal in itself and less weight and media coverage of these views is afforded than was to the more articulate campaign of the centre. Whatever the truth of this matter, the outcome was that the project had the opportunity to prove that it could fit into the local community. Active support came in the cold

winter of 1981/2 when neighbours supplied fresh water when all the pipes were frozen and then burst in 50.

Two relationships that ceased with the closure of 81 Claypath were re-established with the opening of 50 Dragonville. The support of the Claypath doctors and nurses in providing a "courteous and efficient service" in spite of the project being out of the City and the invaluable laundry service undertaken by Plawsworth were both acknowledged in the Annual Report of 1980.

The health care of the single homeless is an issue which is addressed as part of this research. The general problems of homeless patients and the relationship between the project and the medical profession were the two main areas looked at in discussions with the doctors at the Claypath Practice and with a consultant from the local psychiatric hospital.

For the general practitioners a major difficulty for them in dealing with transient patients is in not having a medical history available, and being aware that they could, for example, be in a position of over-prescribing a dangerous drug. The strategy in dealing with all patients in this category is thus one of caution, to the extent of consulting with the previous doctor named by the patient. This strategy is viewed as being in the interests of the practice and the patient, although it may be resented by those patients who only make legitimate visits to the doctor.

This raises the issue of stereotyping where a preconceived image of a group of people in society determines attitudes and behaviour towards individuals from that particular group.

It was recognised that the single homeless had particular medical care needs and the practice was aware that special training for doctors was

available for those working in inner city areas with a high incidence of homelessness. (Discussion at Practice Meeting, January 1986)

The Durham Cyrenian project, as a source of stability for some of the single homeless patients using the practice, was helpful to the practice in that patients were more likely to make return visits to the doctor or nurse and some continuity of care could be provided. Residents of the project made the same number of visits as the average for the practice and the occasional emergency call out was acceptable to the doctors.

Records also illustrate the assistance the practice was able to give and the influence they could exert on behalf of the project in the case of a long stay resident. Jack Grant had unfortunately been taken ill on a visit to the residential home he was planning to move into. After several weeks in Dryburn Hospital it was planned to discharge him back to the project. The initial reaction by the hospital to the refusal by the project to have the resident return, on the grounds of lack of resources to provide the high level of care necessary, was to inform the volunteer worker that the alternative was to send the resident to Plawsworeth Resettlement Unit. However, with the intervention of a doctor from the Claypath Practice, a third option became available. The hospital was to delay the discharge of the resident until his permanent residential accommodation was arranged. Clearly this is an example of the peripheral status of the project and it being denied access to mainstream resources which are available to the medical practice being mainstream.

A useful overview of mental health and homelessness was provided by the consultant psychiatrist, highlighting the complexities of causes, the range of responses now and fears for the future, or as he put it "a leap in the dark".

The underlying problem was one of increasing demand and decreasing resources available to meet that demand. Each dimension of mental health reflected this.

Mental illness must be understood in terms of the individual interacting in the social world. Ambiguities and discrepencies within them both, for some people, cause estrangement. This understanding brings the recognition that any solution must include change both for the individual and the environment.

Within this context the Care in the Community idea is acceptable, but in practice the closure of large, old psychiatric institutions before any replacement provision has been established has resulted in a growing number of people with no care at all, bearing in mind that "community" does not exist in many areas.

The absence of planning in response to identified needs, combined with too few resources allocated for social services, housing, general health care as well as mental health care, is a source of fear for the future. There will be an "explosion" of the problem if it continues to be ignored. With growing social problems it is estimated that by the end of the century one third of psychiatric patients will have alcohol or drug-related problems, one third age-related problems and one third homeless and loneliness-related problems. With an estimated 100,000 homeless people in the UK in 1987, coping on a temporary basis with such environments as bed and breakfast hotels, this is some indication of the scale and extent of the mental health problem.

The point emphasized by the psychiatric consultant is that planning and resources devoted to the social environment, good housing and

availability of employment, would avert the catastrophic situation that will otherwise occur by the year 2000. (Interview, Spring 1987)

If the warnings of the medical profession are heeded then what is required for the present and the future is a wide range of alternative provisions for psychiatric patients to move on to. There is a need for a choice of different types of independent accommodation to institutions for those that required protection from the public. It is within this context that the relationship between the hospital and the project was discussed.

For various categories of patients, the single homeless, those involved in marital break up, those needing temporary accommodation outside the family and those with multiple social problems presented as psychiatric illness, the project has provided stability which is an important factor for treatment and recovery. Both the consultant and the psychiatric community nurse felt that only people who would benefit from the experience were placed in the project and that support for these referrals was forthcoming.

As in the case of the general practitioners the project appeared to be held in high regard, but discussion revealed areas that could be usefully developed. First, improved liaison between the workers and the psychiatric community nurse would ensure common
goals were set for the patient/resident, for example, the most appropriate 'move on' accommodation. Second, the development of community activity would assist in the cohesiveness of any group of residents, in turn leading to further stability.

On the question of alcoholism, a "self-induced" problem of a quite high proportion of residents of the project over the years, the consultant was concerned about the time spent with this category of patient in comparison with other demands on limited time. For half those with alcohol problems

all that could be provided were "drying out" facilities. Sympathy should be extended to those with self-induced problems, but at the same time they have to be prepared to meet the doctor half-way.

Finally, to return to the overall problems, useful as it has proved to be, the project is small and like those involved in mental health care will soon be overwhelmed by the rapidly increasing pressures placed upon it.

Both the discussion with the doctors and the psychiatric consultant were useful, and the improved mutual understanding which was gained could also be achieved from similar discussions with other organisations and agencies with whom the project works.

These good relations were not to be found in the other working relationships of Durham Cyrenians. As the records of the Committee meetings show all efforts to persuade the local authority to undertake work that needed doing on the current property met with negative response as did the approaches for help in finding a permanent project. In fact the support of the Council had to be suspect when it is noted that 50 Dragonville was given rent free, but rates and water rates were due.

The relentlessness of this battle is to be found in the records of Durham Cyrenians right up to the present day, but it is enough here to say that after one year of establishing 50 Dragonville Durham Cyrenians were still trying to impress on the Council their point. At the Committee meeting of 7 Nov it was reported that the Council visited 50 Dragonville on 29 Oct. Points raised were: need substantial funding for repairs, either undertake themselves or subcontract to North Housing Group

Jon Watson, Director of North Housing, revealed in an interview the vast amount of work undertaken during this period by North Housing Group on behalf of Durham Cyrenians. However, their continuing efforts, most of

which Durham Cyrenians were unaware of produced no results. Minutes of the Committee meeting of 10 March 1980: Jon Watson proposed that North Housing Group take over 50 Dragonville from the Council for Durham Cyrenians. It was agreed to raise idea with councillors on their visit, but thought not very likely to accept.

The search by North Housing Group for new premises continued, with many possibilities followed up without success. Market forces were strong and either cost or time limits thwarted them at every stage. Then there were high hopes of a most suitable property in Providence Row over the summer months, hopes finally dashed with the news at the December Committee meeting that the property had not been obtained.

Within the year Durham Cyrenians found themselves in the same position as in the 1970's. The pressures of running a project which in itself demanded a high level of attention, along with the pressure of finding and securing suitable premises for a permanent project, were enormous. There were very few resources remaining within the group to monitor, evaluate current policies and procedures or plan rationally for the future.

Once peripheral they were finding that the process of de-marginalisation was almost impossible, just as the single homeless people they provided for already knew from their own experience. But not quite impossible, as some ex-residents can testify from what happened to them and, because I am still involved and 'in the know' I can say for Durham Cyrenians. But that is jumping ahead - perhaps necessary as encouragement about future achievements.

TRANSITION

The transition of Durham Cyrenians to a project of the 1980's was set in motion through a process of internal change and external forces which demanded change or extinction.

Committee membership changed radically from 1981 with the resignation of David Constantine, founder member and inspiration of Durham Cyrenians along with the announcement by Bill Williamson of his intention to withdraw from the group. Alan Fothergill, the National Cyrenian field worker expressed a concern that with the departure of these two key figures, both charismatic, the collapse of Durham Cyrenians might follow. In fact, this development was to end a type of exclusiveness of an inner circle and presented the opportunity to existing fringe members of the management committee and newly recruited members to contribute to the project. This pattern of change in committee membership had been noted in many voluntary organisations he had been involved with by Frank White, an ex-committee member.

This was the beginning of a wider group with a diversity of backgrounds and a move away from the philosophy and practices of the early period. A fresh approach on one hand combined with the recognition that times had changed with many new demands being made on projects such as Durham Cyrenians led to fundamental changes in both policies and practices through an evolutionary process that still continues.

By the end of 1981 the efforts of the Committee to establish a permanent project were partially rewarded. The local authority, who throughout the year had been unresponsive to all communications from both Durham Cyrenians and North Housing on their behalf, made an offer of a small terrace of houses, 22 - 26 Dragonville. The offer was made on the

condition that the present house be relinquished by Durham Cyrenians when required by the Council for demolition along with the remainder of Dragonville.

For the new group of people coming together as the Committee this was a time of challenge and decision-making which was to shape the project of the future. An agreement was made with Durham City Council to retain 50 Dragonville and keep it in use while at the same time immediately taking on the largest of the houses offered by the Council. For the medium to long term it was planned to bring into use the four smaller houses if and when resources permitted.

Once again Durham Cyrenians were going to be stretching their resources in establishing a new house while running the existing one. However, there were also differences that were going to allow progress to be made this time.

Relationships within the local community remained an essential factor in achieving the goals of the group. Clearly the local authority had come up with the offer of premises as part of an overall plan for the area and it was luck that Durham Cyrenians were to benefit for a while - the lease was only for a short term. There was never going to be an equal partnership here, but the Council were reminded that homelessness was their responsibility and as such the project should receive their support. This was in fact forthcoming in the form of practical work in making 26 Dragonville fit for use in the first instance and intermediate grants for Nos. 24 and 25 the following year.

A further factor in gaining a less servile relationship with the local authority was the support of the Three Rivers Housing Association. They had been approached to work with Durham Cyrenians as a Durham based

association in the hope that being 'on the spot' would lead to more success than North Housing had had in spite of much work and effort over a long period of time. Gordon Kyle was able to use his practical knowledge and position as Manager of Three Rivers Housing Association to obtain all the grants that were available. In this way the funding of the new project was statutory to some degree and there had been the first move to obtaining 'rights' as opposed to asking for 'favours'. Under the cloak of Three Rivers Housing Association it was possible for Durham Cyrenians to move a small step away from the periphery and symbolically a leap into the 1980's.

For the first time in it's history Durham Cyrenians did not have to face local opposition to the new project because local people knew about the existing Cyrenian house. That is, they knew the reality and not the myths which had been the cause of much of the initial opposition in Allergate and Claypath in the 1970's.

Calm had prevailed in 50 Dragonville for the most part of 1981 with several settled residents who were able to participate in the many discussions about how in the first place their house and No. 26 should be run at the same time. Also how in the long term, 26 and the smaller houses could best be used. Such planning ahead was a new departure for Durham Cyrenians, an essential not a luxury, but denied to them in the past by the whole nature of the past projects.

With the running of two houses, 50 and 26, between July 1982 and March 1983, demands on resources were high, but the role of each house had been agreed upon, with 50 as the reception house and 26 as the long stay house. This provided a 'route' for those residents who wished to settle and eventually obtain their own accommodation.

Dragonville, 22-26 and 50

Consultation between residents in both houses and the Committee took place, for example, the record of a joint meeting on 29 November 1982 shows discussion of issues such as admissions and evictions, the role of volunteer workers and the nature of the relationship between residents and committee. This consultation continued as discussion centred around how to use 24 and 25 Dragonville as work to get them renovated was underway. For example, on 11 Nov 1983 a joint meeting was held to consider how the two small houses should operate.

A close examination of the notes of this meeting reveal how the process of transition was happening for Durham Cyrenians, in addition to providing a summary of the current position. The subject on the agenda of this meeting was stated as 'How 24 and 25 will operate' but the discussion extended to all aspects of this item because, of course, houses do not operate of their own free will, but with the imput of residents and volunteers living in them and the committee who have ultimate responsibility for managing them.

The Committee, it's size, structure and functions, had to be reviewed. It was suggested that individual roles within the Committee and the Committee as a group with shared responsibility for the project should be discussed and acted upon. Individual members of the Committee became representative of the group for each of the houses and were a direct link between house and Committee. This arrangement was new in two ways, first, the notion of shared responsibility was being developed and second, all members of the Committee were being expected to take on direct work within the project. In the past this intimate involvement had been limited to a very small group within the Committee.

To have a progress report on the practical matter of repairing 24 and 25 and the necessary dealings with the local authority from a representative of Three Rivers Housing Association was an indication of complete transition in this area.

Decorating was being dealt with that reflected old ideas and new, not altogether acceptable ones. It was planned not to undertake decorating by members of the Committee and other volunteers as had been the practice in the past, but to use a Manpower Services Commission scheme which 'employed' unemployed people for one year. This was cheap for the project, but suspect in terms of principles for some members of the Committee - a shift from voluntary work to voluntarism which was to have a growing impact during the 1980's.

The old and the new approaches to furnishing and equipping the two new houses coexisted, again illustrating that this was indeed a transitional period for the project. In practical terms this meant that all furniture apart from beds was acquired, but new beds and electrical equipment were purchased with a grant from a national charity, Crisis at Christmas. There was an underlying change in attitudes here, in that it was being accepted that potential residents of the new houses had a right, and should expect, to well-appointed accommodation. This was a rejection of the strong, always unstated, ethos that second-hand would do for the project, and therefore, implicitly, for the residents that lived in it. The many projects around the country that had worked towards statutory-funded projects had already achieved a high standard of provision; Durham Cyrenians were gradually moving in that direction.

Major changes in funding the project were not at this stage taking place. Rent and donations were the main sources of income. Home office

funding had been rejected on the grounds that the conditions attached would place unacceptable constraints on the use of the project. Thus the discussion was about rents and how many residents could be accommodated to an acceptable standard, an issue which has to be at the centre of any discussion about provision wherever the funding comes from. This discussion was thus one that was moving the project forwards in its thinking and very much part of the transitional process.

Finally the issue of referral agencies and their relationship with Durham Cyrenians was raised. The transition within the project produced a positive approach to this long-standing problem, which in practical terms meant that the agencies were happy to use the project but not furnish the type of information required by the project which would allow it to make decisions about the clients concerned. The referral agencies would have to cooperate in providing information about potential residents and in providing continued support for them if they wished to place people in the project. This stated requirement was communicated to all referral agencies and must have been a further factor in redressing the unequal relationship between the referral agencies and the project.

Contained within these various asepcts of the project and how far along the road of transition they had reached are the foundations of the project which was to emerge, eventually as a rational, well funded and well managed provision.

To pick up the threads of the history of Durham Cyrenians the date of 28 February 1983 saw the death of the old project in the actual closure of 50 Dragonville and the final laying to rest of ghost of 81 Claypath. This time the closure was less personal, less traumatic and less dramatic because the replacement, 26 Dragonville, was already in operation.

Residents from 50 moved along to 26 where space had been made because there had been time to plan this closure. There would only be half the number of beds, but only for a limited time because plans were already underway to bring into use 24 and 25 Dragonville.

The uneventful closure of 50 Dragonville attracted little press coverage compared to that received by the closure of 81. This was because the closure was not, this time, also the signal that Durham Cyrenians were searching for new premises. The activities of the group did not present a threat to anyone and were, therefore, of little interest to the majority of people in Durham, that is, the mainstream.

The announcement of the closure and of the future plans also featured the lack of any emergency provision in Durham (Durham County Advertiser, 4.3.83). This was followed by a more detailed feature focussing on the increasing trend in young homelessness which had been identified by Durham Cyrenians over the past year, and was a problem causing concern nationally to the many groups providing small-scale accommodation and to campaigning groups such as Shelter and CHAR.(Durham County Advertiser, 18.3.83). Later in 1983 the Durham Shelter Group carried out a survey of the young homeless in Durham and brought the issue to the attention of the housing department (Durham County Advertiser, 11.11.83).

It was progress for Durham Cyrenians to have the time and energy to bring to the public attention not their own immediate problems, but a dimension of the problem of homelessness which was serious within the local context and part of a fast-growing national problem which, as discussed in Chapter 1, has now escalated into a national crisis.

After the usual ups and downs Nos 24 and 25 were duly opened in early 1984 with the combined efforts of Three Rivers Housing Association, the two

most excellent and hard-working volunteers in the project, the willing and able residents of 26 and the Committee. No. 26 became the reception house with one residential volunteer and the two small houses, with one residential development worker, provided more independent accommodation. Two stages of provision had been achieved, along with the recognition that work had to be done on behalf of residents to gain access to permanent accommodation for residents wishing to move into their own tenancies. (Annual Report, 1984).

The need for substantial statutory funding became more pressing with the transition of the project, and was recognised as essential if further development was to be made possible. An application for Urban Aid funding was submitted to the Department of Environment with the support of Durham City Council. This was for the repair of 22 and 23 Dragonville and their use as a day centre for the project and other local people plus the employment of a paid development worker to run the project. The application did not succeed. A revised application - Nos 22 and 23 Dragonville had been demolished by the Council on the grounds of public safety because they had been so badly vandalised - was made thorough the Social Services Department of the County Council in 1984, but this time it was not submitted. By this time there were fewer sources of statutory funding with more organisations requesting funding, so Durham Cyrenians continued to survive on substantial grants from Crisis at Christmas and a local charity, the Shakespeare Temperance Trust, many small donations and much support from local groups and churches.

## 24 and 25 Dragonville

24 and 25 Dragonville

In the light of the widely acknowledged achievements of the project, recognised by the local authority, the lack of statutory funding has to be understood as part of the wider issue of the control over the distribution of resources by mainstream society in such a way that it is the interests of the centre that are best served and maintained. The quality and extent of the work of a peripheral group such as Durham Cyrenians is irrelevant in this context. The essence of this situation is that it is the peripheral nature of the single homeless, along with groups that work with them and on their behalf, defined as it is by the centre, that denies them access to resources. It is evident that at the practical level voluntary groups can improve the provision that they make for the single homeless, an area over which they do define the situation and control the resources they do have.

It is just as evident that at the political level such groups will always be at the mercy of those that control how many resources are available to these groups. Even in the cases where statutory funding had been obtained by local Cyrenian groups it can be withdrawn, as, for example, with the abolition of the Greater London Council and metropolitan boroughs goes the end of their funding for many groups in the voluntary sector.

NEW CONFIDENCE: NEW CHALLENGE

Managing and running three houses effectively was a new challenge for Durham Cyrenians which was met during 1984 through the work of several committed residential volunteers and the Committee as a group.

There was a confidence born out of achievement in developing and extending the accommodation provided in the project. This was a period of internal consolidation in ensuring the houses worked according to plan while the development work continued. There was an official opening in the

summer combined with the launch of a Durham Cyrenian newsletter, both providing information about the project, how it operated and what support it needed. Cycle, the latest newsletter, was written and produced by a group of residents, workers and volunteers in contrast to the earlier newsletters which were written almost entirely by the secretary, David Constantine. This is further evidence of a real change in the style of management, a move from the individual to the group. Both the newsletter and the open day were possible through the work and cooperation of everyone involved in the project and outside support.

Good working relationships with the local authority and Three Rivers Housing Association were consolidated. Activities such as the Adult Literacy Project, the Gardening Project and the Photography Project were all in evidence and were seen to be of benefit both to the individuals involved and Durham Cyrenians as a whole. It was an optimistic time and not too difficult, therefore, for Bill Williamson to finally take his leave from the project as it moved into a new era.

Along with a very positive account of the year that was reported in the annual report for 1984, the challenge ahead for Durham Cyrenians was clearly spelled out. This was to maintain the present level of work and continue with development which was essential because the experience of the project, week in and week out, was that of having to turn growing numbers of single homeless people away. All this was reported in the local press in an article which emphasised the problems of the single homeless and the need for a range of further options in types of accommodation to enable people to move on from the Cyrenian project. (Durham County Advertiser, 6.12.84).

However, clouds were already gathering on the horizon towards the end of 1984 as recruitment of suitable volunteer workers of the necessary high calibre became more and more difficult. As the only service provided by National Cyrenians, the lack of a ready supply of volunteers once again gave rise to doubts about the usefulness of the national organisation. These same doubts were to be expressed by many local groups during the following year to such an extent that during the next two years there was a radical reorganisation of National Cyrenians. The organisation moved to an office in Birmingham and became known as Homes for Homeless People, intending to provide the type of service demanded by the local groups of the 1980's.

The dwindling supply of suitable residential volunteers affected about one third of the local Cyrenian groups which were using volunteer workers or a combination of paid and volunteer staff. Thus it was a trend towards paid workers within the movement that the Durham group followed.

Two aspects of employing a paid worker were investigated and worked upon simultaneously. Funding was, of course, essential and the 1985 Crisis at Christmas grant of £3000 was given towards the funding of a paid part-time worker. Working out the job description for the post was recognised as just as vital, not only in the interests of the prospective employee but for the group as a whole - residents, volunteers and Committee.

Part of the new confidence of the project was manifested in a new way of approaching decision-making and major tasks such as taking on paid staff. Individual effort was replaced with joint effort in the form of aworking group which tackled the job description of a coordinator/administrator and how the new arrangements would work.

The issue of a permanent project had lay dormant for a while, but with a short-term lease on 24-26 it still had to be faced by Durham Cyrenians. During 1985 a further working group from the project collaborated with Three Rivers Housing Association to develop an overall plan for submission to the Housing Corporation for a permanent project, either a new building or rehabilitating an old one.

These two working groups were complimentary in that a permanent project, funded by the Housing Corporation, would almost certainly be expected to be run by paid workers. In the meantime the two became inextricably linked in that it was recognised that the amount of work generated by the development of the permanent project would be more than the Committee could cope with and would have to be delegated in the main to a paid worker.

The bid, based on the working groups proposals for a new project, was submitted to the Housing Corporation in November 1985, and the first part-time paid worker was employed in December 1985.

Mainstream status had not, however, been achieved by Durham Cyrenians. Perhaps an element of de-marginalisation had occurred, but the facts of the situation do not really support this view. First, Durham as an area has low priority in the pecking order of central government funding. It is peripheral in this sense compared to inner city, urban areas. Second, the contract of employment for the coordinator was part-time and for one year. A part-time temporary job can hardly be seen as a central post.

Although the work of 1985 did not in itself produce a permanent project - the bid failed and the worker was part-time - in both cases it laid solid foundations for the future.

1986 was a year of consolidation, with the coordinator settling into post, but bedevilled by the problem of volunteer workers, or complete lack of them or unsuitable ones in some cases.

Durham City Council informed Durham Cyrenians that the lease on the premises was to be extended until 1992, but by mid 1986 the repairs were mounting up and the fabric, decoration and furnishing of the project was such that it was detrimental to the work of the group. With the amount of work needed to maintain and improve the premises, to deal with the volunteer situation and work with residents with immediate problems and on rehousing because there were no volunteers, it was as well that further funding from Crisis at Christmas was made available and the post of coordinator could be made full time and extended for a further year, until December 1987.

What were the foundations laid for? In March 1987 the future became assured as far as such a thing can happen in the late 1980's.
The on-going trust appeal produced funding for three years to secure both the existing paid post and the second one required to replace residential volunteer workers with paid staff. Negotiations between the local authority and Three Rivers Housing Association reached the stage where the lease was going to be handed over to the latter. This would guarantee that a minimum of £5000 per house would be available on the current lease and there was a real possibility that a thirty year lease would be agreed which would allow the housing association to obtain a full rehabilitation grant for the project.

Working groups were set up to thrash out the policy implications and the practical tasks arising out of the transition to paid staff and the

inevitable changes for the whole of the project, followed by the work that would need to be done of planning the rehabilitation of 24-26 Dragonville.

A substantial move towards the centre, the best a peripheral group in a peripheral sector of provision could hope to achieve, provides a sound basis for the continuation of Durham Cyrenians. Most importantly for the continuation of the work undertaken with and on behalf of the single homeless.

The next five chapters are concerned with the manner in which this work has been done, the why's and wherefores of the life of a project such as Durham Cyrenians.

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## SECTION TWO: THE PROJECT

This section deals with the day to day life of the project and those groups of people closely involved in this. Underlying this account is the conceptual framework of the relationship between the centre and periphery at various levels.

There exists a core and a periphery with the resident group itself which have changing membership as people come into the project, settle in and move on, sometimes within a few weeks, sometimes over a longer period of time.

The management committee at various times has had a core membership and a peripheral membership which in some ways corresponds with a particular stage of development of the project as a whole.

The residential volunteer group has always occupied an ambiguous position in the project, being part of the resident group and part of the management group. Coming generally from mainstream society as university graduates or from middle class backgrounds in search of a vocation, volunteers become part of the periphery on a temporary basis. They retain the right to move back into the centre. Thus being in limbo volunteers experience the process of marginalisation, pressures forcing them towards the periphery, in an intense way, which can be the cause of stress and difficulty in coping.

The complexity of relationships within the project emerges as policy-making and implementation are considered as essential to the existence and running of the project, as does the dynamics of these relationships. The appearance of one group providing for another in a charitable manner hides the underlying reality of who gets what from an involvement in the project.

This point is central to the understanding of the voluntary sector itself which can be analysed within the mainstream peripheral framework, a task undertaken in Chapter 1.

In Chapters 4 and 5 the process of "getting in" that is, becoming part of the project, as a resident, committee member or volunteer, is described, This is followed by an account of the experience of being part of the project in Chapters 6 and 7 which cover all aspects of "being in". Chapter 8 deals with the often traumatic business of "getting out" which may be a move in either direction, towards the centre or twoards the fringe for any of the groups involved.

## CHAPTER 4 - THE PROJECT: GETTING IN - RESIDENTS

### INTRODUCTION

The trials and tribulations of establishing the project have been described in relating the history of Durham Cyrenians. Now the essence of the houses, captured over time, has to be conveyed to the reader. The peculiarly identifiable physical nature of a Cyrenians house, the mixed aroma of stale smoke, sweat, boiled cabbage or fried bacon mingled with that of cheap, caustic cleaning materials along with the strangely impersonal arrangement of assorted furniture impress themselves immediately upon the visitor. It is hard not to miss the strong colours that adorn the generally pictureless walls and the surplus sideboards, settees and bed bases that either crowd a living room or clutter the passage.

The atmosphere reflects the physical appearance, being welcoming and hostile at the same time to newcomers and known visitors alike. The appearance is more or less like that of any house occupied by a family with little money to spend on it. The atmosphere is heavy with unresolved conflict arising from the unchosen nature of resident's stay. Residents are individuals who find themselves in a group not of their own making or choice. If those who choose with whom they share accommodation have difficulty in living peacefully and in accord, why should it be expected of residents in a Cyrenian house.?

The house needs support and company but at the same time has to protect the fragile stability of the always changing social world it has to continually recreate for itself. As one resident moves out and a new resident moves in, as an established residential volunteer worker comes to the end of the agreed service and is replaced by yet another stranger, as old and new committee members call in as do ex-residents and others of no

fixed abode for a cup of tea and a chat a great deal of pressure is placed on each resident. Within this social reality there are the many social worlds of the individuals who create it. Some residents welcome all visitors and callers, some do not. Hostility is shown by some residents who resent the 'openness' of the house which is a contradiction to the understanding they are given that the house is their home. The unresolved conflict embodied in the atmosphere of the house characterises the nature of the relationships both within the house and between the house and the management committee.

So why should anyone wish to live in the house or become involved with this project? When do people find themselves without a home or feel the need to become involved as volunteers or committee members and how to they 'get in'? This chapter and the following one attempt to provide answers to these questions, looking at residents gaining admission to a house, residential volunteers being recruited to live and work in a house and local volunteers being attracted to the work and joining the committee. From the many records available (day journals, house meeting records and project minutes), together with interviews with many of those involved) it is possible to present the social process of becoming a resident, volunteer or member both as an experience for the individual and as changing patterns for the three groups within the evolution of the project.

Residents

Again, to the Cyrenians
Although
Been, some distance and New Ground,
Again
Some Kindness and understanding
Amidst, new and old Faces,,
Around,
Yet, my, and our opinion
Like a garden, cultivated anew.
Plants and seeds of the season.
Yet a small weed here and there,
Grows oft-times, to the keenest Eye.
So thinkest,
I - us - and you.

John Bamberough - Durham Cyrenian Resident
(National Cyrenian Newsletter, March 76)

Very few people wish to become residents of any form of temporary accommodation. They have very little choice as single homeless people. For most the Cyrenian house is preferable to sleeping rough, a resettlement unit or large hostel - these are the alternatives and could be said to offer no choice at all.

For the purposes of discussion the analytical definition of groups into concrete or conceptual types according to eight dimensions is useful. (Breakwell, 1982) The single homeless as a group are characterised by the central dimension defining a conceptual group - membership is ascribed through a process of labelling; it is not by choice. The heterogeneous nature of the single homeless group is the reality of the situation, that is, many individuals with many problems, one of which is homelessness.

Those that have sought admission into the Durham Cyrenian project over the years can be placed into two conceptual groups. Both groups wish to make use of the project. One in a way which corresponds to the goals and objectives of the project and can thus be called the 'legitimate" group. The other in a manipulative manner, presenting a 'legitimate' front, but having

goals and objectives which differ from those of the project. This group can be called the 'strategist' group. (Goffman, 1984)

This analysis is disturbing in that there is a hint of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor distinction, an entrenched cultural value spanning the centuries and incorporated into the Poor Laws dating from Tudor times to the Board and Lodging Regulations of the 1980's. Such is the response of society to social problems which present an unknown threat and a perceived need for social control.

This social control mechanism is reflected in the admissions policy of the project, where boundaries are set to include the 'legitimate' group for whom the possibility of accommodation in a small project with support by residential workers may meet their needs. People become homeless through discharge from hospital or prison, leaving a child care institution or losing their home through family break-up. This group of people want to become residents in order to have somewhere to live and to have help in obtaining permanent accommodation and solving personal problems of every conceivable type. As an ex-resident explained to me, he wanted to become a resident because the volunteers at the Soup Run had trusted him, given him bus fare to Durham, their respect for him regenerated his self-respect and a desire to change.

A typical 'career' of a 'legitimate' resident follows a pattern which can be identified in the events noted in the case history of one such resident who lived in the project from 1985 to 1986.

| Date | Description |
|---|---|
| 1985 | |
| Mon 18 Nov | IN 26, reception house |
| Tue 19 | Social worker took him to ex-home to collect personal belongings |
| Sun 8 Dec | House Meeting Moving to 25, medium to long stay house with more independence. |
| Sun 15 Dec | House Meeting Going home Xmas |
| Sun 22 | House Meeting Going to apply for a local authority house |
| Sun 29 | House Meeting Social worker to assist in sorting out problems |
| Tues 31 Dec | Not able to move in with parents as hoped |
| 1986 | |
| Tue 7 Jan | Cttee mtg. Vol for Drinking Choices course |
| Wed 29 | Settled in 25, getting on with John<br>Thinking of redecorating |
| Thur 30 | Hung one of his paintings in kitchen<br>Looking after and attached to cat |
| Sat 1 Feb | Went to visit friends |
| Mon 3 | Worker's comment: Looking after cat. Making coffee for the coordinator |
| Tues 4 Feb | To hospital |
| Sat 8 | Worker's comment: To see family |
| Sun 9 | To St. Nics, evening service |
| Mon 10 | To Singles Club with Dave |
| Tue 11 Feb | To hospital |
| Wed 12 | To hospital. |
| Thur 13 | Out shopping for equipment for 25 |
| Wed 19 | Birthday. With worker to Coal Hole (pub) |
| Thur 20 | To sisters for the day |

| | |
|---|---|
| Tue 25 Feb | To Three Rivers Housing Association re flat |
| Wed 26 | Received notification he, Angus or Dave to get flat |
| Fri 28 | Visited by Three Rivers, did not get flat Disappointed |
| Tues 4 March | Attended Committee mtg |
| Thur 6 | Went with worker to meet new worker. Got a "groovy" haircut |
| Sat 8 | Out for day, with his daughter |
| Sun 9 | Not feeling well, flu |
| Tue 11 | Still not well |
| Wed 12 | Went to Day Centre |
| Sun 16 | Taking things quietly after "angina" attack on Saturday |
| Mon 17 | Visiting solicitor, re divorce |
| Thur 20 | To sisters for day, seems happier |
| Mon 24 | To Plawsworth Replacement Committee, cancelled, bad weather |
| Tue 1 April | Worker's comment: To hospital for Day Club To Shelter mtg |
| Tu 8 | Upset by Angus and Simon incident. Went to Committee meeting |
| Thur 10 | Involved in preparation for coffee afternoon |
| Fri 11 | Helped with Coffee Afternoon |
| Tue 15 | Hospital as usual |
| Wed 16 | Worker's comment: OK |
| Fri 18 | Helped at Soup Run |
| Sat 19 | Worker's comment: "Nearly went into garden" |
| Tues 22 | Grounds of ill health to be taken into account by Council re housing application |
| Wed 30 | Had a meal with friend in Newcastle |

| | |
|---|---|
| Thur 1 May | Council rep called re house, should hear by June |
| Sat 3 May | To visit his brother who brought him back and had quick look round |
| Mon 5 | At Waddington St Art class, and Singles Club, Redhills, evening |
| Wed 7 | Hospital, drink in evening |
| Tues 20 | Worker's comment: Helping Angus move |
| Wed 21 | Coal Hole, with workers, Dave and Simon |
| Tue 8 July | Cttee mtg. Moved out over weekend |
| | Was upset by young female worker incident, and bad state of project. Still attended Waddington Street Day Club |
| | Got council accommodation very soon after leaving |

The entire stay of the resident has been included here because the stages of a 'legitimate career' are evident - gaining admission, gaining acceptance by the group, living in the project and leaving the project. This particular case also illustrates many of the identified patterns of project life. Living in the project and leaving it, along with the associated patterns of social actions and social relationships are discussed in later chapters.

At this point how this resident successfully achieved admission and acceptance within the project are the concern. The support of a social worker is mentioned, and generally speaking a referral through Social Services will be accepted. The absence of any comments on any initial problems suggests that the strategy employed to gain acceptance was one of conforming to the resident group norms. These would include undertaking a share of the household chores, adopting a low profile in house meetings and cooperating to the correct extent with the residential volunteer. This

assessment is confirmed in that a move to the more independent accommodation of 25 Dragonville is agreed within three weeks of admission.

The same boundaries exclude 'outsiders', those single homeless people for whom there is no possibility of 'getting in' either to the project or society, even the periphery because their circumstances are so extreme and their resources to survive in society so limited. The following extract from the house diary of 81 Claypath illustrates how the admissions policy with regard to such people is effectively implemented by residents of the project:

The two extracts taken from the house diaries graphically describe attitudes towards 'outsiders' and how they are dealt with. Tommy, in fact settled down in his own accommodation for ten years, between 1976 and 1986 at which time he reappeared seeking a bed in the Dragonville project. This illustrates the tenuous hold those who have been on the periphery have on mainstream status; how vulnerable they are to remarginalisation, when social forces that can be resisted by those firmly in the centre can destablise, setting in motion the process all over again.

| | |
|---|---|
| Fri 11 Apr 75 | David calls for bed. Doesn't understand why he cannot stay. "Even though he admitted he is pyschopathic." (He needs full time attention which the house cannot provide - he tried to cut his wrists before in this house and even though it is a cry for help the workers & other residents shouldn't in my opinion take the responsibility of having him here)" - written by worker. |
| Tues 15 Apr 75 | 3 am A. Brown arrived "Big uproar in 81 - fucking nutter, madman & similar words could be heard all over this house of sane men!" Brown was given travel warrant back to Plawsworth<br>Mr. Harvey, from Plawsworth, , on phone, said "that if he (Brown) was sent back to Plawsworth he wouldn't let the other men in the house back into Plawsworth if they should ever want to return." |

For such people, always alone, a vision of some special provision is required which would give protection, care and freedom. At present, such people are destined to move from one agency to the next, draining resources but not being assisted, as in the case of Alice, a single women who stayed in the project in 1986, disrupting it to the extent of settled residents leaving, but sadly not benefiting herself in any identifiable way.

On the other hand there are the "strategists" who view the project as one of many alternatives in an unsettled way of life from which they may not wish or be able to change. On almost every day for which there is a record there is a caller for an overnight stay mentioned. Attention was brought to this in January 1974:

> "There is scarcely a day passes without somebody coming to the door. The police, the prison, the hospitals, as well as churches and voluntary bodies, frequently telephone us to ask if we have a bed free." (Durham Cyrenian Newsletter):

| | |
|---|---|
| Sun 4 Nov 73 | Mary turned up with John. Phoned police, taken to Salvation Army by social worker |

Three requests are recorded in an article "Fourteen Typical Days in the Life of the Cyrenian House in Durham" (Durham Cyrenian Newsletter, Spring, 1974):

| | |
|---|---|
| Tuesday | Local vicar sent two young lads round for a bed for one night. Gave them tea and travel warrant to Plawsworth but couldn't do more. |
| Friday | Nightline rang up - is there any chance of a bed for someone with nowhere to go. Had to explain we were full and in any case we don't take people for just one night. |
| Friday | Man knocked at the door asking for a bed. Gave him a cup of tea; he wasn't very keen to go to Plaswsorth |

Similar incidents were recorded over the years:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fri 14 May 75 | 12.30 am - had to refuse young man bed |
| Fri 21 Mar 75 | Man about 25 called pm, with letter from Methodist minister, asking for bed until Mon. Said he might stay, but refused admission because "as you could tell this house wasn't the right thing for him". |
| Sat 29 Nov 75 | Tommy called for bed for week end. Travel warrant to Plawsworth Resettlement Unit |
| Sat 13 Dec 75 | Refused referral for one night from Samaritans |
| Wed 2 Feb 77 | 81 Police referral, blind man who was drunk |
| Tues 8 Mar 77 | Samaritans referred 3 men, referred to Plawsworth Resettlement Unit. Called 11 pm for bed |
| Wed 9 Mar 77 | Probation referred same man, aged 35, Ike said he was selling jewellery in Fighting Cocks, and had been around all day |
| Tues 15 Mar 77 | Late caller for bed, travel warrant to Plawsworth Resettlement Unit |
| Wed 16 Mar 77 | Late caller for bed, full |
| June 82 | Homeless women referred |
| June 86 | Police took man to house at 2 am. |

Many of these unsettled people are genuine about wishing for a bed for the night, others are not. The project is seen as a legitimate target for getting free accommodation and food. As such it is a resource to be utilised in a general survival strategy by those with few resources at their command. Survival strategies, physical, emotional and mental, are central to the lives of homeless people and are explored in the next chapter both within the context of living in the project and being outside of it.

One classic example of a survival strategy is the "weekend resident". The routine is to arrive early Friday evening, declaring every intention of settling down, but after office hours, so no check can be made until the beginning of the next week. Three free nights will have been gained at the expense of the project, and the existing residents. An early departure on the Monday morning concludes the exercise. In the above examples which are taken at random from the records the Friday and Saturday callers are well represented

An earlier version of the "weekend resident" hinged on the availability of casual work, a feature of life in the early and mid seventies. The line is this case was that the job was about to start - always tomorrow, as is the case of Fred .

| | |
|---|---|
| Sun 21 July 74 | Fred, a stranger, arrived having walked fromStockton Accepted into house on usual one weeks probation. |
| Mon 22 | Fred says he has found a job on a building site, starts work tomorrow. |
| Wed 24 | Found in the Market Place, "basking in the sun" with "a quarter empty bottle of cider at his feet". |
| | "So much for the story about the job". |
| | Fred was told not to return to the house. |
| | Extract, journal of 81 Claypath |

This brief snapshot of an episode in the life of one single homeless person brings into focus three issues. First, for one particular homeless person, these few days form part of the pattern of such a life style, occurring in different places with some small variations on a theme but basically very similar. In other words, an element of the 'career' of homelessness.

Second, the majority of single homeless people over long periods of time could identify this account as their own. It constitutes an integral part of surviving as homeless in that the scarce resources that are available have to be fully utilised. Third, this account of a survival strategy in terms of obtaining shelter and food without having cash to purchase them, reveals that it is an intensified version of every day life in mainstream society where entrepreneurial skills are fundamental to the value system. Failure of the strategy for those on the periphery can mean hunger, ill-health and even death, while a similar failure for those in the centre can mean a loss of status, a different life-style and a move towards the periphery. A difference in degree not kind.

Fred used his limited and fragile resources effectively to gain admission and stay in the house for three days without paying rent. Admission was gained because he had an accumulated knowledge of how the system works, officialdom cannot be easily contacted at weekends and voluntary projects such as Cyrenian houses are caring and accepting. Acceptance was gained through the presentation of an 'appropriate self' an identify achieved by the initial disclosure that he had walked from a town about twenty miles away and maintained by the announcement that he had obtained a job. The stay was legitimised in that he was not around on the Tuesday, leading to the assumption that he was at work. At each stage the non-payment of rent was legitimised with the need for questions avoided, with Fred using his acceptance as a resource in itself to maintain his credibility. (Goffman, 1984)

But not for long. The fragile nature of the whole fabrication was revealed with his discovery by the workers. His identity as a 'con man' along with the realisation that they had been the 'mark' brought strong

reaction from the workers. The comments made about Fred and his speedy eviction demonstrate mainstream values coming to the fore representing a contradiction to the usual tolerance which guided the thinking of the house. This tension arising from the contact between two cultures, the working class culture of the residents and the generally middle class culture of volunteers and committee members, runs through every aspect of the project and as will be demonstrated is the source of many conflict situations within the project.

Thus within the periphery as in the centre there are limits and boundaries, acceptable and unacceptable strategies available to achieve objectives. Once broken or crossed the 'offender' is subjected to strong social forces ensuring that the status quo is maintained. Fred had affronted the project objectively by staying rent free. Many others succeeded in this, but were allowed to pay arrears. Fred's failure was in affronting the workers, adequate members of mainstream society, in duping them into believing him. In Goffman's terms he failed to 'cool the mark' that is, to restore the self perception of the workers to the extent that the whole episode could be explained in some other way with no loss of face for anyone.

How residents gain admission to the project is discussed in terms of policy and practice and the interaction between them over time. Recognition of the reasons why people seek admission to the project, together with the objectives of the creators and management committee of the project, forms the basis of admissions policy.

How the policy is implemented and works out in practice is a more complex process which has become more formalised as Durham Cyrenians developed. There has been a movement from the early stage of a very loose

structure found in 81 Claypath and the Oakenshaw house, to a semi-formal structure for 50 Dragonville which was discussed, agreed and recorded at a joint house/committee meeting held on 29 November 1982 to the formal structure of the present project with paid staff and a written licence agreement which residents have to sign on entering 24-26 Dragonville.

At this stage the general point can be made that there is a relationship between the formalisation of the admissions policy of the project with a move towards the mainstream and a corresponding exclusion of the most peripheral of the single homeless who were accepted into the project during the early years. This process itself is a dimension of the innovatory nature of the voluntary sector. The ideas tried out in voluntary groups are gradually adopted by the statutory agencies working in the same field. New groups are continually being established in the voluntary sector to replace those that have gone through the various stages of development to the point where they become 'establishment'.

What does this mean in practical terms? There has been a project set up in Manchester specifically for "heavy drinkers, particularly spirit drinkers" a group likely to be excluded from established houses. Thus, just as in the first instance those working within statutory agencies had little optimism about the success of projects such as Durham Cyrenians but were proved wrong, so those working with the "drinking school" members, outsiders even to the periphery, may find success and show the way forward in this area of social provision.

During the early period the prime objective of the project was to provide shelter and support for some of the single homeless in Durham City who had become known to Durham Cyrenians through the Soup Run that they

operated three times a week in a derelict part of the City. Thus in principle "getting in" was easy.

In practice the house was usually full. If a bed was available other forces were at work which would determine whether a person would be admitted. First, there were non-personal factors which could prevent someone from being accepted.

If the majority of residents were in the older age group as was the case during the 1970's and early 80's this became a social barrier to younger people being admitted. Reinforcing the age barrier was the sub-cultural difference between the two groups which became even more apparent from 1983 when the proportion of young, single homeless increased at a rapid rate until 1986 when at least half the residents were people under 25.

It became clear that the life styles and value systems of the two groups were so wide apart that the presence of one group excluded the other. This issue is central to the discussion of living in the project which is explored in more detail in later. The effect of this was to destablise the project to the point of almost collapsing in mid-1986.

The crisis situation brought into focus the need to assess the aims and objectives of the project. Evaluation of current and future policy was undertaken. The decision to employ two paid staff and give up the use of residential volunteers who could no longer meet the complex demands of the project was taken within this discussion.

During times of stability the existence of a cohesive group can make it difficult for a newcomer who gains physical entry into the house but remains excluded from the group. Being accepted, the second stage of 'getting in' is not possible in this situation.

Residents have in the main part been male. Occasionally there have been female residents in each of the houses, but the dominance of male residents has presented an obstacle to the implementation of a policy of running a mixed project. Underlying this conventional explanation of the lack of female residents is the issue of male attitudes.

During the discussion about having a mixed house in the early 1980's a resident of 50 Dragonville commented: "Put women in - you may as well stick a red light outside." For him this indicates a set of working class attitudes about women arising from his 'failed with women' life-experience which is shared by many of the residents of projects. As Orwell discovered during his time as a single homeless male one of the deprivations of this group is that of social contact with women. The hostility arises out of the fear of the unknown and it, along with the condition of homelessness, prevents any change in attitude. (Orwell, 1949)

Some committee members were also against admitting women into the project, a position rationalised on three counts. First, unsuitable physical conditions; second, women residents would create even more problems in the project and three, consideration of existing male residents and the 'failure with women' problem which raises the wider issue of sexuality in the project.

The inconsistency in this argument is that it was not applied to female residential volunteers, which is why underlying factors have to be addressed. In fact all three areas could have been dealt with and in doing so some problems would have arisen but others would have been solved. The reality of the attitudes of committee members has to be seen within a cultural perspective in the same way as the attitudes of residents. For committee members the issue arising from women having access to the

project has been that of gender roles within their life experience set in a middle class cultural system. This leads to the denial of female homelessness which has been on the whole hidden because women cope with it in a different way to men, for example, remaining in violent relationships to keep a roof over their head

Thus the nature of the project has made it impossible for single homeless women to get in. Again, this complex issue is discussed further in terms of the small number of women residents who have lived in the project.

The other factors which may prevent a single homeless person from getting into the project come under the heading of personal. An ex-resident may have been "barred" from the project for violent or disruptive behaviour, for having alcohol on the premises or for not paying the rent. The knowledge and memory of those who were "barred" was extensive going back into the depths of the past and forward from one house to the next.

Readmission to the project is an area where negotiation determines the outcome and centres around the reason for leaving the project. Those "barred" are most unlikely to be allowed back in. Those with rent arrears can make a deal to pay back the debt. A particularly difficult situation is when someone is being discharged from hospital as mentioned in the "Fourteen Typical Days" article:

> Tuesday — Phone call from Winterton Hospital - do we still have a bed for one of our ex-residents, now a patient there as he's due to be discharged. Explain ....we are full ...

In 1984 a resident was able to retain his room in 25 Dragonville by paying the rent while in hospital.

Where ex-residents have been in prison they have been able to enlist the support of the Probation Service in negotiating payment of rent and rendition to the project.

A clearly identifiable pattern has emerged over the years where people have gained admittance as a "reward" for assisting in some way with the work of the project. Going back to the house at Oakenshaw where the repairing and decorating work of two residents of the first house, 81 Claypath, are well documented (National Cyrenians Newsletter, November 1974 and House Records) as is the fact that they became the first new residents. Tucker and Paddy acted as night watchmen when 50 Dragonville was having basic repairs made to it, and duly took up residence. Finally, Mark looked after 25 Dragonville while work was underway and then became the first resident.

Finally during the time before a house was established in Durham contact with potential residents was made and maintained through the Soup Run, and again in 1978 - 79 when the project was in between houses. The Soup Run remains a focal point for contact with the project and is often the first place people go if they wish to become a resident of the project.

The well-developed informal network amongst local homeless people ensures that the " acceptable" and the 'outsiders' are well known on this grapevine which extends to the residents of the Cyrenian house. Thus someone known to abuse the unwritten laws of the group will not be allowed into the project. This arrangement consolidated the policy which, as described earlier, effectively excludes 'outsiders' from the project.

The existing residents form an ingroup which can agree to accept or reject someone on grounds of personal like or dislike either at the actual time of arrival or later by means of various subtle strategies. In practice

getting in has two stages, becoming a resident in the house and becoming part of the resident group living in the house. The new resident has to go through both stages.

Thus it can be argued that in theory the management committee in making the policy hold the power and control over admissions. In reality the power lies with the resident group who act as 'gatekeepers' to the house and effectively control admissions.

In analytical terms the existence of the project became a factor in the process of marginalisation of single homeless people in that it created a centre within the periphery although it was itself peripheral in relation to the mainstream. In consequence the experience of becoming homeless and marginal in the wider society is repeated within the periphery. Residents of the project, like mainstream society, value the position they have and become the social force which allows other homeless people to move towards the centre or further towards the periphery depending on whether they gain admittance to the project. Such processes are an integral element of the 'homelessness career'.

Gaining admission into the project became even more crucial as time went by and the project itself became a means of access into the mainstream as links were forged with housing agencies creating a route to the housing market. At the same time the need to formulate and implement a clear admissions policy became essential if the further objectives of providing opportunities for residents to obtain independent accommodation was to be achieved. By 1987 a formal admissions procedure had been developed which included an interview with a worker, meeting other residents, a review after once week if accepted and a final decision by existing residents of the house after two weeks.. Hurdles that would

present great difficulties to many ex-residents of the project, but ensure that admission is only available for those that are likely to fulfil the aims of the project.

The complexity of mainstream peripheral relationships is highlighted by this evolutionary process undergone by the project. The counter productive effect of the development of the project in this way was that some people were excluded from it, the project being one of the many pressures in the process of marginalisation that ensures that for some the periphery becomes permanent.

The issue of bringing policy and practice closer together has been resolved over the years through a process of bureaucratisation. Thus the policy became more and more defined, for example, a formal probationary period was introduced in recognition of the existing second stage of 'getting in'. Unwritten understandings became unwritten rules which by the early 1980's became written rules. In 1986 they were incorporated into a formal document - the licence agreement.

The whole process was necessary for the survival of the project itself in that an order had to be imposed upon the management if it was to be effective and guarantee the continuation of the project. Thus, rent collection was initially viewed with distaste, but it soon became clear that it was essential and had to be undertaken and recorded to ensure an income for the project. For residents rules set the boundaries within which they could exercise power thus providing limitation of power and protection for potential residents that what was the stated admissions policy would be more or less what they experienced in gaining entry into the house. It remains to be seen whether the introduction of a written licence agreement

will ensure that there is a perfect match between policy and practice or whether there is still room for manoeuvre.

This approach in looking at how people become residents of the project has assumed the role of the residential volunteer workers. From 1986 the presence of a non-residential member of staff has been of a mediating nature in contributing to and implementing the admissions policy of the project.

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## CHAPTER 5 - THE PROJECT: GETTING IN - VOLUNTEER WORKERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### INTRODUCTION

The fundamental issue that underlies the discussion and analysis of volunteer residential workers and volunteer management committee members is that they choose to become involved in the project in contrast to residents who in the main have no such choice at all.

This issue of choice reflects the nature of the relationship between mainstream and peripheral society in that belonging to the former brings with it a wide range of options and access to economic, social and political power and status. Choices and access to resources such as the housing market, the employment market and health care which are denied to those who have been relentlessly pushed towards the periphery, at each stage of the process becoming a little less self-determining, to the extent that those existing on the fringe of society are powerless, have no choice and no access to the resources of society.

The mainstream periphery relationship manifests itself within the project at the various stages of involvement of residents, volunteer workers and committee members. Much of the intensity found in the project hinges on the close contact between those involved. Direct contact between those with power and control and those who are powerless and controlled takes place within the project. This is a feature peculiar to a voluntary group which has resulted in many volunteers, workers and committee members, not being able to sustain their involvement over any length of time.

This confrontation between mainstream and periphery within the close confines of a small project can be identified as volunteers become involved, as they work for the project and as they cease their involvement. However,

the form that the confrontation takes is varied, frequently shrouded in what appear to be mundane concerns such as cleaning, an issue which dominates life in the project and is examined in detail in the chapter looking at life in the project.

For residents seeking admission to the project there are two sources of control. First, the admissions policy of the project, that is, the control mechanism of the management committee, the mainstream. Second, the existing resident group, who as residents move into the mainstream in relation to those potential residents still on the periphery, with the strategies designed to allow in or keep out potential residents in terms of self-interest. In other words strategies employed to gain some vestige of power and have some control over who they live with.

For potential residential volunteer workers there have been two systems to negotiate in order to get into the project which run parallel to those controlling resident admissions. First, the recruitment policy of the management committee and the associated selection process both of which became more formalised with the development of the project. Second, the existing resident group which has always been instrumental in the initial acceptance or rejection of residential volunteer workers. Recruitment and acceptance of this group form the basis of discussion in this chapter along with that of the recruitment of volunteers to the management committee, a somewhat less ordered activity than that of volunteer worker recruitment.

**RESIDENTIAL VOLUNTEER WORKERS**

From the very beginning the need to staff the project was recognised. Resources to do this with paid, trained and experienced workers were not available. This is a typical position for an organisation in the voluntary sector, especially one providing for a peripheral group in society. For

volunteers this situation has meant that there has never been any difficulty in joining the project.

This being the reality of the situation a cynic might argue that the philosophy developed around the use of volunteer workers during the 1960's and early 70's was a rationaliation used to justify a practice which under close scrutiny proved to be questionable both from the point of view of the volunteers and the residents

This philosophy about the wide use of volunteers corresponded with the national and local expansion of the voluntary sector into many social and welfare fields as outlined in Section One (Brenton, 1985). It was rooted in the alternative society ideology which dominated the thinking about how to achieve a better society than the materialistic, consumer oriented world of that time.

Founder members of Durham Cyrenians and some of the early volunteers were influenced by this 1960's thinking with one or two dedicated to the alternative society ideology as David Constantine recalled when talking about setting up the project. He added that there was high status attached to volunteering during this period, and that the payment of the same as the supplementary benefit allowance paid to residents was a symbolic gesture about the concept of 'community'. It was never thought by the management committee that the volunteer workers and residents were in the same position in terms of life style or life chances, but for a while they were sharing a similar life experience within the project.

Smallness and a strong sense of sharing and caring with the development of 'community' resulted. Others such as Anton Wallich Clifford, founder of the Simon Community and later, Tom and Brigid Gifford who broke away from Simon and founded National Cyrenians, had little influence on

Durham Cyrenians which was in many ways a pragmatic response to an immediate need perceived by David Constantine who said in an interview that he "acted out of compassion. in response to a problem he had already become aware of from an earlier involvement with the Oxford Simon Community."

However, if the intention of those involved was to achieve change through an ideology of the alternative society, the marginal nature of the voluntary sector as a whole and the Cyrenian movement in particular, represents a fundamental flaw in that philosophy because it ascribes power to the periphery.

Within the prevailing philosophy of the fast expanding voluntary sector the concept of mutual benefit for the volunteer worker and the projects they worked for was central to the use of volunteers. The former would be offered the opportunity to help those in unfortunate circumstances, to gain valuable experience in the field before moving on to social work training or "to discover themselves". In return the project, for example, one providing accommodation, would be run smoothly, with the efficient collection of rents along with the reliable organisation of shopping, cooking and cleaning being ensured.

This exchange theory avoided the issue of exploitation of volunteers, both in terms of using them as cheap labour and in providing the support that is necessary for those working in projects such as those developed by Durham Cyrenians. It also ignored the third dimension, the residents themselves, people who in addition to being homeless frequently had other problems of a personal nature such as health, along with economic and social disadvantages.

Both Bill Williamson and David Constantine were quite clear about these two issues related to the use of volunteers. During the early stages of the project at 81 Claypath workers received daily support from these two core committee members, and a 'cheese and bread' lunch supervision system was developed with the intention of achieving a balance between supporting workers but allowing them to develop skills as they worked on their own initiative. Both these committee members have acknowledged the demands made upon them by volunteer workers and I can confirm that this was also my experience as someone closely involved in volunteer support over some five years.

David Constantine was very certain of the contribution that the residential volunteers could make to the development of 'community' within the house in terms of being different from residents, with different backgrounds, different social contacts and in just being young. The volunteers could provide the opportunity for residents to widen their often very narrow horizons which would enable them to become part of the 'community' of the project. This was a fundamental reason for having volunteer workers and was deemed to outweigh the problems of recruiting and supporting them.

However, from that early stage right through the development of the project, residents have always remained the central concern of the project as a whole and for those involved in managing it on a daily basis. In the later stages of development, the move away from using residential volunteers has had my full support. This is because of the recognition that residents need and should receive support from those experienced in the work and who will have finite demands in terms of support. Non-

residential, paid workers will contribute to the policy-making of the management committee and be in a position to implement it.

In the context of the overall management of the project, earlier described as 'crisis management', a similar pattern emerges with regard to the use of volunteers. It was not until unsuitable volunteers were recruited that the issues surrounding their use were addressed. The crisis in the recruitment of volunteers produced concern over both the supply and the calibre of volunteers who could undertake the complex, frequently sensitive, tasks required, expressed passionately in the Annual Report of 1976, as David Constantine said:

> "I said we had a difficult summer. I shall now be more specific and say that our difficulties were in large measure due to the volunteer workers who manage our houses. Either we could not get them or they proved unsuitable. ...We have seen time and time again in this past year ... when problems were caused - and that is to say when pain was inflicted by the very system, by the very people whose undertaking its to solve problems and relieve pain. How often have we actually introduced into the lives of the men in our houses such trouble as they might not otherwise have met with? How often have we not only not helped but harmed? I say 'we' and I mean it: we as an organization - committee and workers - in our corporate responsibility for other people. I have not before now thought it so very necessary to examine ...motivation. ...I would say to would-be workers, and to those whose job it is to recruit them, that a Cyrenian house is not a retreat, nor a finishing-school, nor a training ground, nor a reserve. Then I shall have said enough and more than enough, and shall appear unkind to those workers we have had whose excellence will not be forgotten."

But the questions were asked about the volunteers, their motives, commitment and ability to add further to the problems of residents. What was avoided at that time was the morality of the management committee in using volunteers at all.

The policy of Durham Cyrenians remained unchanged for many years to come, with the recruitment and selection of volunteers remaining a high priority for the management committee and a constant pressure upon them. In fact, as the records show, obtaining volunteers was more often than not a matter of crisis.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mon 24 May 76 | Workers - bad situation, no supply from National Cyrenians. Possibility of job creation volunteer. Contingency plans made |
| Mon 21 June 76 | Committee meeting - 1 Workers, vols obtained. MSC funding available, but need discussion on desirability<br>Guy (new worker) welcome<br>OKS - new wkers expected Nigel & Daisy<br>Two vols org. for Sept |
| Tues 20 July 76 | Committee meeting Nigel (wker) went abruptly on Mon 19 July Not seen or hard of since House has been largely managed by residents. Money matters - need for tighter control. Discussion about problems concerning workers, in nature of organisation to attract a certain number of workers like Cedric B, Cyril P and Nigel L. |

Extracts from Committee Minutes 1981

> "No volunteers available from National Cyrenians.Volunteer supplied by National Cyrenians had to be asked to leave after six weeks. 50 Drgonville operated from November 1981 to April 1982 without a volunteer, but became unstable towards the end of this period."

Again in 1986:

> "No volunteers available from Homes for Homeless People (formerly National Cyrenians). Local recruitment drive through the local Job Centre produced some eight candidates for interview, none of whom were thought to be suitable. The usual practice, developed over many years, of taking the 'best of a bad bunch' continued, with the result that the reception house had to be closed for a week when the volunteer had to be asked to leave and further recruitment organised."

There have been many reasons for the quick turnover of volunteers which will be discussed in the next chapter on 'being in' the project. Many volunteers stayed for only a few weeks, as can be seen from Table 5.1.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY OF VOLUNTEERS

ACCORDING TO

HOUSE WORKED IN

| House | Non Graduate | | Graduate | | Education Unknown | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| 81 Claypath 1973-78 | 4.85 | 4.35 | 2.91 | 4.1 | 1.35 | 0.75 |
| Oakenshaw 1974-77 | 3.75 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0.5 | 2.6 |
| 50 Dragon-ville 1979-83 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4.6 | 0 | 0 |
| 24 - 26 Dragonville 1982-87 (last volunteer) | 5.2 | 3.6 | 5.75 | 4.6 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall average 1973-87 | 4.7 | 3.24 | 4.16 | 4.4 | 0.94 | 1.64 |

The most notable feature of these average lengths of stay is that in no category is the minimum requirement of a six month stay to be found. This would indicate that the type of work and the extent of the stress experienced by volunteers places a higher than expected strain upon volunteers who thus leave before the agreed time.

KEY

M = Male

F = Female

Average length of stay is given in months

For candidates wishing to volunteer there was no difficulty in 'getting in'. The project, desperate for volunteers, could not operate an effective selection process. "More making sure that they were not obviously of no use" as David Constantine pointed out.

In analysing the 'average length of stay' of volunteers over the life of the project no significant factor emerges as dominant in determining how long volunteers remained in the project. As Tables 5.2 - 5.6 demonstrate there are no major differences between those volunteers with or without higher education, between male or females, by age, by where they were recruited from, the type of support provided, or eventual career intentions. Those volunteers with some previous voluntary work experience did on the whole stay longer than those without such a background.

The 'shambolic' recruitment service provided by National Cyrenians remained the only real source of volunteers over the years. As such it remained an essential element of the uneasy relationship between the local group and the national organisation. With little satisfaction from either Community Service Volunteers, all of whom tended to be very young, or volunteers recruited locally with their own special problems, it really was a case of putting up with the National Cyrenian service which seemed to be the only contact with a small, specialised market.

All this in turn contributed to the employment of unsuitable volunteer workers. This perpetuated permanent crisis until the use of volunteer residential workers was abandoned in 1987 after much discussion and funds were obtained to pay for a second full time non-residential member of staff.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY OF VOLUNTEERS

ACCORDING TO

AGE

| Age of volunteer | Non Graduate | | Graduate | | Education Unknown | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Under 21 | 4.25 | 3.85 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 6 |
| | | | | | age unknown | |
| 22 - 29 | 5.81 | 3.83 | 4.17 | 4.42 | | |
| Over 30 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 0 | | |

KEY

M = Male

F = Female

Average length of stay is given in months

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY OF VOLUNTEERS

ACCORDING TO

TYPE OF RECRUITMENT

| Type of Recruitment | Non Graduate | | Graduate | | Education Unknown | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| National Cyrenians | 4.38 | 4 | 3.6 | 4.42 | 3.5 | 1 |
| Local contacts | 6.3 | 1.5 | 6.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Source unknown | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.85 | 1.93 |

KEY

M = Male

F = Female

Average length of stay is given in months

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY OF VOLUNTEERS

ACCORDING TO

TYPE OF SUPPORT

| Type of Support | Non Graduate | | Graduate | | Education Unknown | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Informal, by committee 1973-77 | 4.08 | 3 | 3.75 | 3.8 | 1.21 | 1.7 |
| Formal, by committee 1977-85 | 5.5 | 5.1 | 4.75 | 4.88 | 0 | 0.75 |
| Formal, by paid staff 1985-87 | 4 | 3.1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

KEY

M = Male

F = Female

Average length of stay is given in months

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY OF VOLUNTEERS

ACCORDING TO

STATED CAREER INTENTION

| Intention | Non Graduate | | Graduate | | Education Unknown | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Social Work | 6.22 | 4.27 | 4 | 5.11 | 0 | 0 |
| Further/ Higher Education | 4.22 | 4 | 6 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 4.5 | 1.5 | 3.18 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 |
| Undecided | 5.5 | 5 | 5.22 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unknown | 2.93 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1.17 | 1.57 |

It would be expected that volunteers with social work career intentions would be most likely to complete a stay of six months or more. However, those volunteers who stated that they were undecided about a future career seem to stay generally as long as 'social work' volunteers and longer than volunteers with other career career intentions. It is possible that although undecided about a particular career, the intention amongst this group of volunteers is to pursue a career within the 'caring professions'.

KEY

M = Male

F = Female

Average length of stay is given in months

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY OF VOLUNTEERS

ACCORDING TO

PREVIOUS VOLUNTARY WORK EXPERIENCE

| Voluntary Work Experience | Non Graduate | | Graduate | | Education Unknown | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Some Vol. Work Experience | 4.75 | 4 | 5.75 | 4.58 | 10 people | 9 |
| No Voluntary Work Experience | 3.7 | 1.5 | 3.6 | 0.87 | | |

From these figures, taken from a period of 14 years, it is evident that those volunteers with previous voluntary work experience, which ranged from community service organised from school to full time Community Service and Voluntary Service Overseas, completed a longer stay than those with no suchexperience.

Notably, the male volunteers without previous voluntary work experience stayed more than twice as long as females without previous voluntary work experience. In contrast the male volunteers with previous voluntary work experience had only a slightly longer average length of stay than female volunteers in the same category.

KEY

M = Male

F = Female

However, gaining acceptance by the resident group was a different matter altogether for newly recruited volunteer workers. The experience of moving into the Cyrenian house and becoming part of a hitherto unknown world must always have been a culture shock, and proved to be one which brought to an abrupt end the ambition of many a young person to embark on a career in social work.

All the evidence we have points to each resident being an individual within the house rather than a member of a group, but the arrival of a new worker was one event that did produce temporary cohesion to the resident group, drawn together through tacit understanding and familiarity. Any newcomer represented the unknown, a threat to the existing order. (Rosenberg and Turner, 1981)

At the same time, a naive young new worker was a resource to residents to be used in the strategies of survival, and use it they did. This was a situation where the control and power shifted into the hands of residents. It depended upon the calibre of the new volunteer for how long residents took control. It depended on how this initial stage was dealt with whether the volunteer was going to be an effective worker or not.

It was inevitable that the new volunteer would be 'conned' in some way, sometimes over money, but just as frequently in dealing with the competition for attention by each of the residents. The arrival of a new volunteer was one of the few occasions when the residents would become a cohesive group, sharing a common objective, to make productive use of such an opportunity. The new volunteer may be given to understand that it is the usual practice for volunteers to lend money to residents, or to give money to residents for fish and chips as well as providing the usual shopping.

Attention-seeking frequently took a destructive form, for example, refusing to eat meals prepared by the new volunteer, or refusing to speak to them. Both these strategies were effective in gaining the attention of the volunteer while making them feel inadequate and unable to cope with the job. This was possible only for as long as the power remained with the residents and they controlled the situation whilst undermining the authority given to the volunteer by the management committee. How destructive this type of strategy could be to the self-confidence of new volunteers is evidenced by some of the effects. Jamie only stayed for four days in 1975, while in 1980 I returned home to find Sharon sitting on my doorstep in floods of tears.

However, if the new volunteer was able to win what amounted to a battle for power within the house there was every likelihood that they would be accepted by residents and be given the authority to do this effectively. The status quo would be established in the house with a new set of strategies being employed by individual residents which were to do with surviving as an individual in the house which we will come to in the chapter on 'being in'.

The role of the management committee in relation to the acceptance of new volunteers into the house should have been crucial, and if it had been readily fulfilled the process for the new volunteers would have, in many cases, been far less painful. As it was committee members were forced into acting as substitute workers in the absence of volunteers. For example, Bill Williamson recounts the days of 81 Claypath when, in just such a situation, he, David, with their wives Diane and Helen, undertook the tasks of daily shopping and running the house. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that even such committed management committee members reacted to

the arrival of a new volunteer with a sigh of relief at the prospect of being able to return to the pressing tasks of their own busy lives.

The consequence of this further example of crisis management was that the new volunteer was left very much at the mercy of the house without the initial induction, support or supervision that volunteers need. Such was the situation in September 1983 when Ruth was about to leave and no replacement volunteer had been recruited. A new set of circumstances, with different committee members taking on new responsibilities, but with similar consequences which are described by Sue in the following way:

> "Initial contact was with Linda and Ruth. I was invited to stay overnight. I arrived at lunch time and spent the afternoon in the project. I was surprised because it was an ordinary terraced house, just like someone's home, clean and it did not smell. There were just ordinary people in the project. I had expected something different, probably because I had visited a large hostel for over 100 men in London.
>
> "Peggy called and took me out for the evening, and Jack G was mentioned as being a problem for Ruth. That's all I can remember.
>
> "I slept in Ray's room, he had changed the bed for me. He slept on the settee. In the morning he told me he had been in the room to get his towel when I was sleeping. I didn't like the thought of that at all. It worried me a lot.
>
> "Later in the morning a few committee members came and asked me questions. I realised there was an assumption that I would be the worker, but it was never stated like that. Ruth was depressed, and thought the project was depressing and isolating, and thought it would be like that for me too. I decided to take no notice."

Sue went on to describe her arrival as the new residential volunteer worker at Durham Cyrenians:

> "Nobody came to meet me at the station, so I took a taxi to Drgonville.
>
> "As I walked through the door I was presented with an old tobacco tin which contained the house keeping money and a bunch of keys and that was it.

"That evening Bill Williamson the chairperson, called for a chat. For two or three weeks I felt alone, although I saw members of the committee; I felt I was getting nothing from the management committee, although the usual support was provided. I just had to get on with it.

"I learnt from the residents. Arnold G decided to look after me. This was communicated to me but never stated. I can now see it as a strategy for gaining attention. It prevented any of the 'cons', all around money, being successful. For instance, residents told me that the house keeping was so much a day per resident and they got the money to spend. I had a resident telling me that this was not so, so could deal with it. In fact, I wouldn't give them the chip money on Friday, which they really did get! I seemed to be getting on the phone to check what were accepted practices quite a lot.

"I was accepted as the worker straight away by all the residents except Ray, who had the power in the house. He did accept me after a while. The main problem was that there was a constant fight for attention from three of four residents."

In contrast to Sue's experience Brian had found a stable house on arrival at 50 Dragonville. In search of 'exciting work experience' in a small organisation after a spell of working in the bureaucratic statutory sector the element of the 'alternative' which remained around at that time, 1981, with founder member David Constantine still a central figure, drew him to the project. Brian responded to the orderly running of the project and the people involved in the management committee, although initially he had reservations about being the only residential volunteer in the project.

The lack of any real selection procedure by National Cyrenians had surprised Brian, as had the urgent request he had received to go to work in Chatham Cyrenians. He transferred to Durham Cyrenians with some experience of the work and an awareness of many of the issues relating to becoming a volunteer worker. He reflected that he had gone through the 'initiation' process in Chatham Cyrenians, through the experience of being 'ripped off' financially by a resident

With the development of the project, and through discussions with field workers from National Cyrenians and other Cyrenian groups, like other aspects of the project, the recruitment, selection and induction of residential volunteer workers became more formalised, Volunteer job descriptions were introduced and a working group prepared an induction programme for the next volunteer in the summer of 1985. However, it has to be said that the sense of urgency about obtaining the next volunteer remained the main concern throughout the life of the project.

This remained the case even with the employment of the first non-residential worker at the end of 1985, when a system was introduced whereby candidates were interviewed by a panel made up of the worker, resident and management committee representatives. Importantly, the most unsuitable candidates began to be rejected.

Having raised the question about the use of volunteers in residential projects such as Durham Cyrenians and having discussed many aspects of the issue, it could be argued that only after ten years of experience was a solution found to the central problem of providing support for residents in a way which would not place them in danger of being hurt or abused further.

Residential volunteer workers undeniably had a major impact on the lives of residents, but no more so than did the management committee of the project. In formulating policies and making decisions about the project the management committee was in a powerful position over the lives of residents. It is to how people become members of the management committee that we now turn.

**THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

Before looking in detail at the recruitment of members to the management committee of Durham Cyrenians it is necessary to set this

voluntary group in the wider historical context of the voluntary sector.

A fundamental element of volunteering is that it is an individual activity without the constraints imposed upon and the accountability required of the statutory sector providing social services.

Rather than a coordinated response to a broad, identified need in society, such as health care or nursery provision for all under fives, voluntary effort is more the whim, however well intentioned, of an individual or a group, to do something for somebody else. Moreover, this activity is organised on the basis that the voluntary group knows what is required for those who they perceive as less fortunate than themselves and frequently without regard for other provision either statutory or voluntary.

For Durham Cyrenians this was not the case. David C. explained that the ideology underlying the setting up of the project was simply one of providing shelter without any notion of interfering in the lives of the residents or "any supposition that we knew what was good for them". There was a contradiction, a 'slight dishonesty' in this because you could see when someone's life was going wrong, sometimes irredeemably wrong, and so things did change over the years, and those within Durham Cyrenians did, without any arrogance or presumption about things, try to make a difference to the lives of such residents. A 'slight difference' as David C put it.

On the second point relating to other provision, David C pointed out two things. Firstly, Durham Cyrenians took account of other agencies involved in the care of residents and prospective residents. He, and some of the volunteers, visited many of them, including the prison, hospitals, the probation and social services, Plawswroth Reception Centre and other hostels.

Secondly, there was, in fact, way of alterna
provision, He recalled an inci es brought a
man to the door of 81 Claypath a d of smoke wi
any reference to the workers abou

DAvid C remembered being sh which the pr
became part of the network and sional organisation
by the statutory sector at a ti they were at the
beginning of the learning proces

A further essential of volun rewarding activity.
It has to be acknowledged th onship is one of
exchange. There has to be the c those who need to
volunteer, to give time and effor o do so.

A parallel to present day vo Wordsworth in his
description of the old man of t route, accepted by
everyone, he had a role to play ity:

"I saw an aged Beggar i

"...; and, from a bag
All white with flour, the
He drew his scraps and

"But deem not this Man u
Who are so restless in y
Who have a broom still
To rid the world of nuis
Heart-swoln, while in yo
Your talents, power, or
A bursthem of the earth!
That none, the meanest o
....should exist
Divorced from good - a

"....While from door to d
This old Man creeps, the
Behold a record which to
Past deeds and offices o
Else unremembered, and so keeps a
The kindly mood in heart

"Where'er the aged Beggar takes his rounds,
The mild necessity of use compels
To acts of love; ..."

(The Old Cumberland Beggar, from The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, 1893)

The dynamic relationship between the 'givers' and 'receivers' is clearly recognised and acknowledged here.

As a voluntary group Durham Cyrenians has many of the characteristics common to such groups. The structure of the management committee has remained much the same over the years, with a core group of 'personal' volunteers intimately involved in the day to day running of the project and an outer group consisting of volunteers who would like to be more involved or are just 'testing the water'. There is a further group consisting of representatives of agencies with whom there is close contact over referrals and the welfare of residents.

Throughout the records there are appeals for volunteers to join the management committee, but at the same time the structure and functions of the committee seem to have prevented the expansion in any effective way. This issue was raised with David Constantine who recognised this to be the on-going situation. He had few qualms about it because he saw it as appropriate that only a very limited number of people should be involved in the running of the house. Therefore, only a limited number of people should be involved intimately in the lives of residents and volunteer workers. For some activities, such as fund raising, large numbers were required and could usually be recruited through the contacts on the committee.

The following section explores sources of new members, how they join the group and their motivations for doing so. What happens to them once

established and how they set about leaving are processes discussed in later chapters.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The first group are 'personal' volunteers in that they wish to become involved in order to do something about the problem of homelessness. As we saw in the discussion of the formation of Durham Cyrenians the group was established to provide shelter for those people in Durham who had nowhere to live and no means of securing accommodation. This group created the project. They, and others who were recruited or just came along, then had the on-going task of managing a project which was to put it mildly fraught with difficulties over the whole of its history.

For David Constantine there were two co-existing motives for being largely responsible for forming Durham Cyrenians and establishing a project. His compassion for those without shelter which dated back to his involvement in Oxford Simon Community where he helped out as a student volunteer. His interest as a writer in different people, an interest which he believes never took precedence over his care for them.

As David Piercy remembered, someone (later identified as Canon Maurice Simmons, the chairman of Samaritans and involved in Durham Cyrenians), had given his name to David Constantine as someone who would be interested in joining the management committee. David Constantine had contacted him by telephone, he had attended meetings and when the treasurer left he took over this office. Thus he had a clearly defined role in the management committee. David Piercy was interested in the project and enjoyed visiting 81 Claypath. A desire to help others could be fulfilled through this involvement, although he did not express this overtly when talking about his involvement with Durham Cyrenians.

John Hudson long standing member of the committee, had to search hard in his memory about how he became involved in Durham Cyrenians. In reviewing the past John revealed the typical nature of the group with an inner and outer group. John had been in the Durham Shelter Group which had been mainly concerned with fund raising and publicity, and through this experience had decided as a 'typical do-gooder' as he described himself, that he needed to be involved in a locally based charity that produced practical results. Somehow, probably through the University, he heard of Durham Cyrenians and went along to the meetings. He noted that David Constantine was 'the power in the land' and that it was necessary 'to carve a role for yourself'. When the unpopular job of being responsible for the Oakenshaw house became available he took it and felt he had a role and could contribute to the project.

Harry Mears joining the early 1980's, saw his change in life style on retirement as his motivation for becoming involved. Introduced by his friend, John H, he had a clear idea of what he could contribute, the practical skill of a treasurer. However, being appointed to that office at his very first management committee meeting did take him by surprise. Harry recognised his need to be active in his new-found spare time, but felt his motivation for joining was 'to give back' and 'to be of service' to the community. The involvement had come about through his friendship with John, had been 'one of those things that just happen by chance'.

Certainly the element of chance does seem to signify in these random examples of how people became involved in the management committee of Durham Cyrenians. They are probably typical of most others. For example, Bill Williamson became involved through his friendship with David Constantine and I was also introduced through John H whom I had known as

a member of the Durham Shelter Group. Since becoming involved myself I have introduced several friends and colleagues to the project.

A sub-group of 'personal' recruits to the management committee are ex-residential volunteer workers and the two that have spoken about this experience are more positive about their motives than most of the people mentioned above. She cited her interest in the project, her commitment to it and the desire to continue her involvement in the work of the project as reasons for joining the management committee.

Brian had taken a hard look at the project and the management of 50 Dragonville during his time as a volunteer, and joined the management committee 'to draw attention to the issue that he felt should be given high priority, that of the well-being and security of residents in the project rather than the smooth-running, occupancy-level and financial state of affairs, all of which seemed to occupy the attention of the management committee a great deal'. .

This selection of 'personal' committee members with a variety of routes into the management committee and with many different motives for joining it, is a random sample from a small project. What is interesting is that although they represent a typical cross section of a voluntary group membership, their work with the 'undeserving poor' is counter to what would be expected of such a group in the voluntary sector, rooted as it is in the nineteenth century ethos of providing for the 'deserving poor'.

This analysis would suggest that there may be other motives for volunteering that are either not recognised or not acknowledged by those concerned.

Whether there is a class dimension to being a volunteer, about attitudes to undertaking tasks without direct payment, is an issue which

has given rise to widely differing views. David Constantine . does not see volunteering in this way, merely as something he wanted to do and made the effort to do. This is an individual perspective, not fully taking into account his own cultural background which underlies it.

A sociological perspective on volunteering addresses the class issues which are raised in the analysis of this activity. A discussion that Bill Williamson had on several occasions with two residents of the project in 81 Claypath illustrates the first point relating to this. Paddy G,, a working class man with a mining community background, found the fact that he could not identify 'the fiddle', what David and Bill were making out of their involvement in the project, a continual source of annoyance. His cultural background, with a predominantly instrumental world view, prevented him from seeing that there were different pay-offs which were the rewards for those managing the project. Later, in 50 Dragonville, a young resident Jim faced the same problem as Paddy, and in trying to 'spot the fiddle' became obsessed with the accounts of the project as he tried to identify how money could be extracted by the management committee.

With working class occupations there has always been a clear distinction between work time and leisure time. The direct link between work and payment for it is reinforced through clocking on and off, factory hooters and time sheets related to an hourly rate of pay. In addition to this factor about time and payment, working class occupations are frequently run on the basis of shift work and overtime. From this it would seem that even given a positive attitude towards voluntary work, the practical issue of lack of control over time prevents wide involvement of the working class in volunteering.

The non-comprehension of various residents about the voluntary nature of the work done by committee members has, therefore, to be understood both in cultural terms and practical considerations.

The opportunities available to those in different occupations are of a very real type. For example, the more or less regular hours and certainly self-controlled working hours of many middle class occupations allowed routines such as short, daily visits to the house in 81 Claypath to be made by David and Bill, both lecturers in the university. This in no way denies the personal commitment of these two members of the management committee, but emphasizes the point that someone working shifts would find it impossible to develop such a pattern of involvement. They simply do not have the choice of when the hours of work are.

Finally, working class occupations generally are low income occupations. Certainly in the early 1970's personal transport and telephones were not resources available to the majority of working class people and yet they were necessary to take a full part in the management of projects such as Durham Cyrenians. Thus, although on one level it did not cost money at another level the working class life style, with limited access to many resources, some already outlined and others such as contacts with those in power, does not lend itself to voluntary work.

Once again an intense reflection of working class life is to be found within the project itself. All the chacteristics of working class culture are found in strength within the lives of the residents. Sometimes there is a good atmosphere within the project, but sadly, if not surprisingly, the individualistic approach to life prevails. Within the content of a working class cultural background it has to be understood that there is little space for consideration of others, within the project even less. To return to a

personal note, DAvid Constantine saw his own life, a happy one, as the source of strength for his contribution to the project. By the very fact of being in the project, it is hard to imagine that residents share this type of experience, and therefore, the source of strength to add to the lives of others.

Here lies the payoff that Paddy and Jim could not spot, simply that of being able to offer help to others and gaining personal satisfaction from doing so.

It is worthy of note that motivations generally associated with volunteering were not mentioned by those interviewed. Firstly, the status in the local community that is credited to those that are involved in charitable work. This point relates back to the discussion about the peripheral status within the voluntary sector of projects such as Durham Cyrenians working with homeless people who do not elicit the sympathy of the general public. A result of this is that there is little status to be gained from involvement with such projects working with the 'undeserving poor' and hence the inability to attract the mainstream volunteer who is drawn to organisations that provide and fund raise for children, the old or animals, all of whom fall into the 'deserving poor' category. This phenomenon is central to the difficulty found over the years in attracting new members to the management committee.

Second, there seemed a reticence about mentioning that volunteers gain much from volunteering. These rewards take different forms. It may, perhaps, be taken for granted that there is personal satisfaction in working for nothing, but factors such as gaining valuable experience to further a career within the same field; gaining access to an alien world

which can attract and repel at the same time or to become part of a group and gain new social contacts were not mentioned.

A problem which arose as a result of the pursuit of new management committee members was that sometimes unsuitable candidates offered their services. Usually the people concerned recognised that the project was not for them and left. However, once or twice there were real problems, for example, when a young women joined the committee and promptly established an 'unprofessional' relationship with a resident, who in turn used this as a resource for manipulating workers and committee members alike.

From the interviews with 'professional' management committee members it was evident that they had a clear awareness of why they were involved. Canon Maurice Simmons, involved at the beginning, said that 'there is a responsibility to assist those in need, those with less resources'. In his case this took the form of attending the Public Meeting organised by Durham Cyrenians on behalf of the Bishop of Durham and getting involved with the group, mainly David Constantine and Cilla who were at that time searching for premises. Through his involvement with the Family Welfare Council (Church Social Services), he was instrumental in obtaining 81 Claypath for the project.

Frank White as curate of St. Nicholas Church, recognised the tradition of involvement of that church, but still felt 'thrown in at the deep end' when in June 1982 he became chairperson at his first committee meeting. This experience, very similar to that of Harry being appointed as treasurer, was the first indication that the management committee was in a state of permanent crisis at that time. Frank described the involvement of the church with the contribution made by the vicar, George Carey, and the key role played by the church building as a place of contact for the homeless

in Durham and newcomers to the town. Hence the commitment of St. Nicholas' as a professional organisation and and Frank himself, defining his role as 'working and getting to know people on the ground'.

Frank commented that on joining the committee he found it 'in a process of change, with some members going through a personal process of change in commitment, others without a defined role and distant from the men'. In addition there were 'naive workers with little experience of the single homeless'. He felt the committee was 'in disarray'. This analysis confirms the process of change that was discussed previously in terms of the project moving from its original form and style to a more formalised structure as 50 Dragonville closed and 24-26 came into being at a time when the problem of single homelessness was growing in both scale and complexity.

In 1984, when Gwen Raine, a community psychiatric nurse with patients living in the project, joined the management committee, it had reformed itself with a new strength derived from a new style of management based on sharing responsibility and defining roles for all those involved. However, there still remained some confusion of the commitment of 'professional' members of the management committee.

As Gwen pointed out using the vivid example from 1986 within the management committee there was some confusion over the role of 'professional' members. Even though she said at the committee meeting that it was not possible for her to collect jumble for the planned jumble sale she was nevertheless pressured into participating which she did by driving those collecting jumble.

For Gwen there was no confusion. To be on the management committee was 'useful in my work, making follow up easier'. Although referrals are

normally part of a programme being worked out for a patient, Gwen found it useful that a referral could be made in an emergency. Gwen also felt she was in a position to liaise with the project on behalf of other 'professionals' while at the same time she could contribute to the project in that she was available to residents who were not her 'clients'.

The confusion over what type of commitment committee members have to the project may have been a further contributory factor in the difficulty over recruiting new members. This issue has been raised within the committee, and there has been a growing awareness of what can be expected from various committee members.

In conclusion, the importance of who is recruited to the management committee, the perceptions they have of the project, of the work of the group and of what they can contribute to the organisation, has been recognised. In response to the difficulties experienced during the process of change identified by Frank W, the management committee discussed the issue, took action to resolve some of the problems, such as allocating appropriate tasks to all members, and in 1985 took advice from a management consultant on improving performance.

All this is important because the management committee is a powerful group which, through the management of the project, has an enormous impact on the lives of many people who become residents. How this task is undertaken, monitored and evaluated is an essential part of the discussion about 'being in' which follows in the next two chapters.

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## CHAPTER 6: THE PROJECT - BEING II

### INTRODUCTION

To live in a project like Durham Cyrenians is to continue to exist on the fringe of society. This experience in temporary accommodation is part of the continuing process of marginalisation which perpetuates the peripheral nature of single homelessness. The harsh reality that 81 Claypath as temporary accommodation was classed as No Fixed Abode when given as an address illustrates how this process was experienced by residents.

This strange,transient world of the single homeless is entered into by volunteer workers and management committee members when they join the project. They become involved in what transpires to be a strangely familiar world. Mainstream and periphery constitute society, inextricably linked by social, economic and political forces determining and defining the totality of society.

DHSS and supplementary benefit, known about but peripheral to the lives of those that run the project, are central institutions to peripheral groups such as the single homeless. Housing, maybe the elegant residence of the upper class of a past age, now deteriorated to slum conditions becomes home for those without access to decent accommodation: or housing, high rise blocks of flats, the 1960's answer to shortage of land and wide-scale slum clearance, soon rejected as unsuitable for families, became home to those that had no alternative. The housing stock becomes part of the process of marginalisation, now with the additional irony that as demand increases for urban property, the derelict and run down areas inhabited by those with fewest resources, are moved once again into the mainstream without regard for the former inhabitants.

Such was the known career of 81 Claypath, the school caretaker's cottage, Family Welfare Service office, the first house opened by Durham Cyrenians and now a private house in a high price range. The point of including, and possibly repeating these matters is to illustrate the complex network of mainstream and periphery, the continual movement in all directions which binds them together in a way which is reflected in the project. It is only one housing market and within the project are those that have and have not succeeded in it.

In looking at how residents, volunteer workers and committee members 'got into' the project it became clear that the relationships between the three groups had an influence on who actually lived and worked in the project. In this chapter the theme of the nature of relationships becomes the pivotal point in looking at the life of the project. Within this framework both the individual influences of some of the people involved and societal factors affecting the life of the project can be placed into a coherent context. Further, the perceptions of life and events in the project that emerge from presenting the views of those concerned directly illustrate that it is the human process that is central and the search for 'factual evidence' is likely to be unrewarding.

There is an historical perspective running through this chapter which relates to the project itself and single homelessness as a growing social problem. Changes in philosophy and practices were inevitable with the development of the project, and positive in that they were because of growing awareness and in response to changing needs. The formalisation process can be traced through the history of the project as can the effects which it produced for both those living in the project and those managing it. The escalating problem of single homelessness has touched directly on

the life of the project, both in the numbers and diversity of people seeking accommodation and in assessing what involvement the project should have in campaigning for the rights of single homeless people.

Having negotiated getting into the project, either living in it as a resident or volunteer worker, or managing it as a member of the management committee, what is it like 'being in'?

A wide range of characteristics come to mind when considering this question and to a large extent they are the determining factors of the relationships within the project which are the subject matter of this chapter. The list is dominated by the negative - a sense of aimlessness, a gap between the understanding of the residents, volunteer workers and committee members, boredom, conflict, obsessions, discontent, frustration, underlying currents, shifting alliances, tensions, hostility,destructiveness, addiction to television, sadness and a need to leave. There are only intermittant flashes of a positive nature, for example, concern for others who are very vulnerable, and the unity that developed in coping with a very bad winter.

If this list is surprising, then in taking this opportunity to look at the underlying reasons for these characteristics it will be possible to add to our understanding of the social nature of the problem of single homelessness.

RESIDENTS

Life as Kitchen Porter

"Go to work at 9.00am,
Have a cup of tea,
empty rubbish bags,
clean fridge,
wash and polish taps,
start washing pans.
10.00 am: breakfast.
Carry on washing pans.

11.00 am: pint of beer.
11.30 am: cup of tea,
keep going till 2.00pm,
then lunch,
repeat what I did this morning.
4.30 pm: have something to eat,
then finished.
It's easy like."

A typical working day of a resident from 81 Claypath, (Durham Cyrenians Newsletter, January 1974.

For those living in the project life did not stand still. For the individual phases of 'being in' can be identified, for the resident group the changes in membership created a continual process of change which can be placed within the core and peripheral framework. Issues such as leadership, scapecoating and cliques had to be worked out over and over again. Within this environment is the further dimension of varied length of stay in the house with residents experiencing the phases of 'being in' at different paces.

At the same time the frequently rapid coming and goings of residential volunteer workers had a destablising effect on those living in the project both at an individual and group level.

Also important to the every day life of the project was the contact with closely involved committee members. This relationship embodies unresolvable conflicts which arise out of the reality of the situation and the expectations of those involved. For the peripheral group living in the project the house is the centre of existence, often the sole source of meeting all their needs, physical, social and emotional. For the committee members living and working in mainstream society the project and those living in the house are peripheral, with work and family occupying the central place.

Underlying these contrasts is a further one of the different pace of life between the project and those involved in running it, frequently a source of misunderstanding. A visit of half an hour may seem a long time in the day of a busy university lecturer with many and varied calls on his time. To the resident, with an unstructured day in an unstructured week half an hour is a fleeting moment and such a visit can leave feelings of neglect, discontent and even resentment.

In looking at life in the project from the viewpoint of residents the comments of past and present residents are invaluable. Within the context of the pattern of the three phases experienced by those living in the project, the expectations and accounts of residents who have lived in the various houses are presented here.

Residents have lived in the project for a short time, a few days or at most a couple of weeks, people stay for a period of months and in some cases years, some for one stay only, others returning many times. One resident, Roger H, has been a resident in each of the houses run by Durham Cyrenians from 1973 to 1987.

The three phases that characterise many medium to long stays in the project are one, initial involvement as the major part of becoming established as part of the resident group; two, maintaining the position once established and three, disengagement as the need to leave becomes pressing or the possibility of leaving becomes real with the promise of alternative accommodation.

The following case histories illustrate the three stages identified as being part of the process of living in the project.

Robert - 81 Claypath

| | |
|---|---|
| Thur 16 May 74 | Moves in |
| Fri 31 | John tells him he is doing too much, he is huffed and suicidal but persuaded against this behaviour |
| Sun 28 Jul | Spent day clearing Cyrenian. shop |
| Tue 30 | Meets a girl. says he will marry her but depressed. Drunk and Suicidal |
| | Enough! |
| Wed 31 | Told him to go. |

Tommy - Oakenshaw

| | |
|---|---|
| Sun 22 Dec 74 | In |
| Sun 12 Jan 75 | HM In charge of back garden |
| Sun 19 Jan | HM Left HM |
| Tue 28 | Birthday, to be celebrated in club |
| Mon 3 Feb | HM Offered to decorate workers room but not needed yet |
| Sun 13 Apr | HM Agreed he should represent Oakenshaw at Cttee Mtg |
| Mon 7 July | Said if Katy would not go he would. |
| Sun 13 | HM Representative to committee meeting |
| Mon 11 Aug | HM Said leaving on Fri |

William - 50 Dragonville

| | |
|---|---|
| 23 March 1981 | Attended Rochdale meeting with Jackie and Len |

Peter - 25 Dragonville

| | |
|---|---|
| Mon 9 April 1984 | In, going to help with Coffee Morning and Soup Run |
| Sun 15 | Going to visit Abbey Day Centre<br>Cooking with Martin. Going to record expenses re budget to ensure food money is adequate<br>To put lock on door |

| | |
|---|---|
| Sun 22 | HM Cooking with Martin, still happy. Keeping cost record |
| Sun 29 | HM Offered to do tasks to prepare for Opening. No problems with money. Going to Abbey Day Centre |
| Tue 8 May | HM Needs lock on bedroom door. 15p phone money - Martin told Sue, she did not agree. |
| Mon 28 May | HM Agreed to look after Alan's canary. Not going on trip<br>Giro missing, DHSS investigating - Peter to keep us informed<br>Said "settled in and plans to stay a long time" |
| Mon 11 June | HM Needs lock on door |
| Mon 2 July | HM DHSS & Peter re giros |
| Mon 16 | HM Agreed to go to DHSS re giro |
| Mon 30 | HM DHSS man had called re giro. Said would try to sort out arrears,<br>Peter to see DHSS Wed or Thurs |
| Mon 13 Aug | HM Still not seen about giro. He had asked DHSS to contact Mr. C - Probation. |
| Tues 14 | WC Filling in housing application form |
| Thur 6 Sept | Cttee Mtg: DHSS will not pay because he is working. Likely to leave. Agreed if circumstances change and he can pay can return to 25 Dragonville, not 26, the reception house |
| Tues 25 | WC Helped with Soup Run. Probation Officer wishes to help with DHSS problem. |
| Tues 2 Oct | Cttee Mtg: Room to be held until 6 Oct only |
| Tue 1 Jan 1985 | For lunch |
| Wed 24 April | Moved into 25, re Cttee agreement |
| Tues 25 June | WC Left for shared house in Esh Winning with George |
| Tue 22 Oct | WC Helped at Soup Run as usual - "invaluable" |
| Mon 23 June 1986 | HM Moved into 26 Dragonville, to sign on |
| Mon 7 July | HM Agreed to move to 24 on 14 July |

When 81 Claypath opened, a Cyrenian house was an unknown quantity to many of the single homeless from the area. Some of those involved in opening it were familiar to them because they had been organising a Soup Run on a derelict site in the centre of Durham. This activity took place at the same time as they pursued the long and time-consuming task of securing premises for the project, a process described in Chapter Two.

The expectations of many of the single homeless from the area must have been coloured by past experiences of other provision such as the Plawsworth Reception Centre as it was then and large hostels in other towns such as Newcastle and Sunderland. Taking this into account, initial expectations must have been low in that the Cyrenian house would been seen as just another one of these most inadequate possibilities for the single homeless. But the personal contact with committee and workers would alter this expectation quickly and radically, and it would seem that this was so from the evidence of people who lived in the project.

Andrew and Adrian talked affectionately about 81 Claypath. As Adrian said there were good times and bad times and everyone 'mucked in' in running the house. Adrian recalled that he scrubbed floors and put the fire on every day, matters confirmed by Andrew. Certainly they both had a sense of belonging to the house, as evidenced by the resentment they felt when food was taken by people living in the Oakenshaw house. "We 'phoned up about it" which meant they talked to David Constantine . But not a sense of ownership, describing David Piercy, the treasurer, as 'the big noise', saying that only workers, not residents, were allowed to attend Committee meetings, and that House meeting decisions were changed, rules were changed.

It seemed that structures soon developed and precedents were made creating a set of expectations about being in the house. Votes were taken on whether someone could come into the house. There was ambiguity about the payment of rent and rebates, a source of concern to Andrew that some people would pay the rent and then demand most of it back. Further, the expectation was that rules for the house should apply to residents and workers alike, and thus it was a matter to report when workers had members of the opposite sex visit them in their room. Even if it were just to take up a cup of coffee this was breaking a house rule. The underlying issue here was sexuality, an issue of importance throughout the project, which is discussed along with the other central issues affecting life in the Cyrenian houses over the years.

It would appear that initially there were few expectations on the part of residents, but that these soon developed, especially around ambiguous issues where the experience was that one thing was being stated but something else was happening.

This was crucial in the case of the Oakenshaw house, where the stated policy was that it was an equal part of the project to the house in Claypath, but the experience belied this. For example, the request for some form of transport, reasonable in view of the some seven or eight miles distance between Oakenshaw and Durham, was never given serious consideration by the Committee, a factor which reinforced the physical isolation of the Oakenshaw house. In this case the expectations of the house in relation to the Committee seemed to be low and the experience matched them as the Oakenshaw house seemed to develop an almost independent existence, sometimes only linked through contact with the workers.

Perhaps the memory Stan had of 50 Dragonville was clearer than those of the two ex-residents of 81. His statement that the men 'hated each other' although very strong rang true. It confirmed much of the evidence from the first two houses, 50 Dragonville and my own observations of this period.

Hatred of Roger came over as one of the strongest emotions that Andrew and Adrian had experienced during their time with the project. The basis of this hatred seemed to be that Roger was probably the most successful in the survival game, a doubtful achievement in that it caused him to be an outcast.

A different type of hatred resulted when men came into contact with others further along the 'career' of homelessness, where it was found to be intolerable to live with a permanent reminder of what the future holds.

From the very early stages of the project residents had expectations of the volunteer workers. These expectations arose from the residents' experience and what they were told about the role of the worker in the house. Workers were expected by residents 'to look after them'. Andrew R and Adrian both said they preferred 'girl' workers because they were more sympathetic which was important because 'we had problems'. The fact that the 'strictness' of the female workers was also mentioned, for example "no alcohol was allowed in the house, even at New Year"is a further indication that the issue of sexuality is central to understanding life in the project, and in this case it could well be related to a problem of attitudes to women and relating to them which was shared by many residents. On the other hand the male worker, Barry, who disappeared after spending the house keeping money was referred to as 'a character' and clearly did not present a problem to the residents.

Residents in the project in the 1980's were made aware that it provided temporary accommodation and that assistance would be given by workers in finding more permanent accommodation. Many of the residents in 24 - 26 Dragonville were younger than had been the majority of residents in the earlier houses. The layout of the houses also made it possible for women to be accepted into the project, although other factors did not encourage this particularly. The young people were less ready to accept the traditional case law that had built up around the running of the project. When informed that the policy of the project was for residents to be involved in decision-making they accepted this and challenged the workers and committee when it did not happen. This was quite different to the position in 81 Claypath where the residents did not take up the challenge.

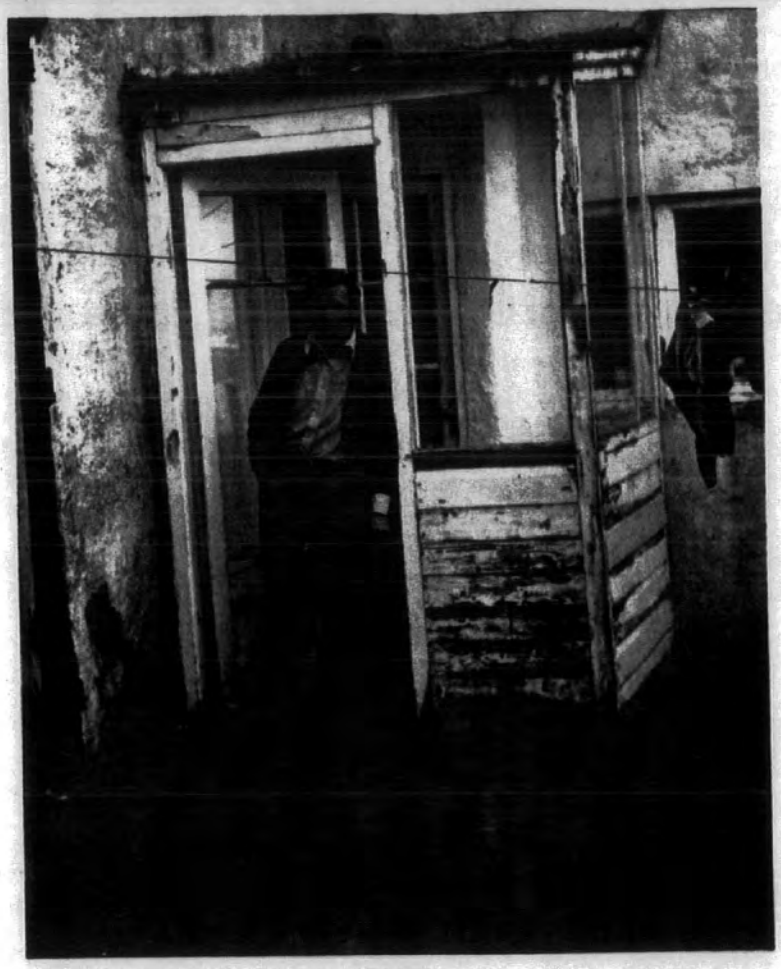
The following comments about living in Dragonville are taken from the first newsletter of that era, produced in the Spring of 1984 as part of the Adult Literacy Project:

"The house is good"
"It's alright"
"It's a chance to find out who you are"
"I enjoy living here"
"I think it's alright"

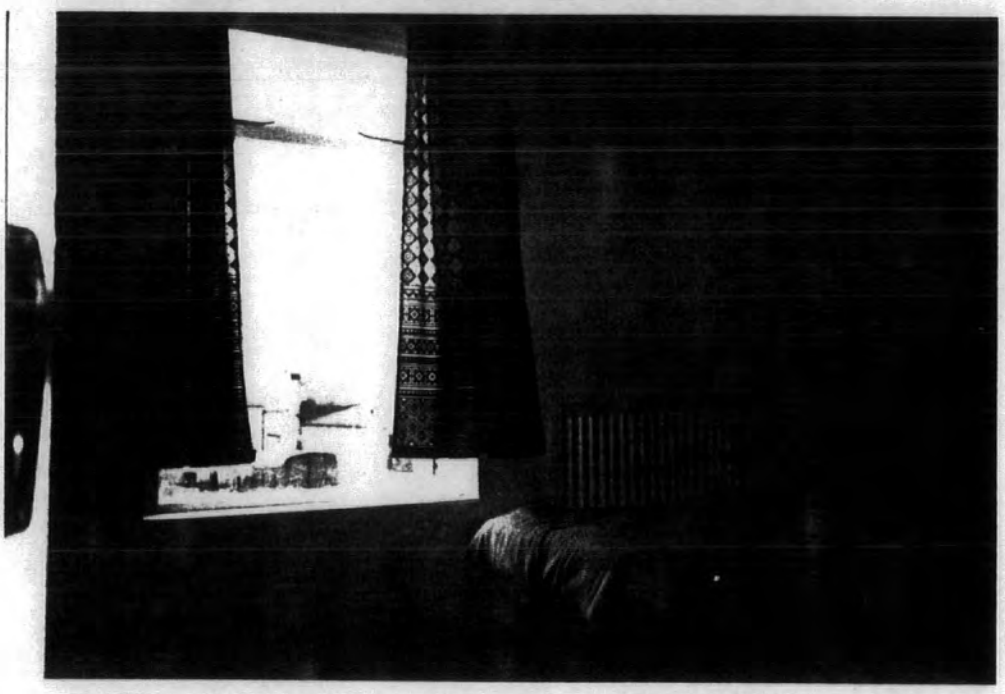
This positive experience of living in the Durham Cyrenian project was reinforced for most of these residents because they moved out into independent accommodation. There had always been a small number of residents gaining access to mainstream housing, but by the mid-1980's it became the norm rather than the exception. It can be argued that a significant factor in this was that residents in the Dragonville project had a different set of expectations, demands and experiences than those of residents living in Claypath..

81 Claypath

50 Dragonville



## 24 - 26 Dragonville



24 - 26 Dragonville

## VOLUNTEER WORKERS

Some volunteer workers only lasted a few days or a couple of weeks. It has to be assumed that the expectations they had of the project were not met, that the experiences they had did not encourage them to stay. This can only be an assumption because they did not leave their thoughts on these matters.

However, the volunteer workers who stayed kept diaries about life in the project and wrote about it for local and national newsletters. The following discussion is based on these sources, using their impressions to discover what these mostly young people expected, and the experiences they encountered, while living in a Cyrenian house.

The expectations and experiences of the volunteer workers have to be set in the context of the overall development of the project. There is some correspondence between the impressions provided by the volunteers with the development of the project. This is apparent from the early times when everyone was learning about running a project, there was little structure and the formalisation process was just beginning. Then through the stages of negotiation when there was a search for a balance between informality, tolerance and acceptance and the efficiency that was required if the project was to continue, to the formal, structural, bureaucratic stage where residential volunteers are replaced by paid staff.

One of the first workers, Dillon, wrote in August 1973:

> "With Tyneside (Cyrenians) we've shared the headaches over the soon to be filmed 'Access' programme. A camera/sound crew of seven coming into a house of nine... normally our voyeurs come in ones and twos...
>
> This is a time of great tension. A lot of it is worthwhile; some individuals (myself included) have been brought to realise disturbing truths. A man with a family elsewhere, who used to feel comfort by thinking he was depriving his family, now KNOWS that he has suffered a

greater loss - they don't need him. But now this is not self-pity, it is knowledge. Knowing too that he is needed here, he lives a worthwhile life.

"We've had our first violence too. And though we gel when under pressure from outside, internal frustrations have the short term effect of splitting the nine into nine groups of one, and three (slightly larger and less defensive) groups of three."

The Durham Cyrenian Newsletter carried 'Comments and Impressions' from Marion which included the following:

"My first impression of the Durham House was one of friendliness even though I found the language baffling being a foreigner from London. I have now settled in and the atmosphere becomes more and more homely as the weeks go by. The coal fires and attractive kitchen with the oak beams across the ceiling and the old-fashioned kitchen range contribute to this. Bet even more do the people who live here, and those who are connected with the house.. ...

"We differ from the other hostels in trying to foster a *sense of community*. This is done by holding weekly house meetings and sharing the household chores. In so doing we hope that people who live here will feel that they have a home and a place where they can belong. The fact that some men have stayed here for several months when they have found it difficult to settle anywhere else is one sign of success which is evident already. Despite the fact that I am the only women in the house I haven't had to do all the cooking. I'm even learning a few things, for instance, how to make Yorkshire puddings that rise so much that you can't get them out of the oven! The recipe is '4-5 eggs, flour, milk and water and knock it up'. The instructions are vague but whether it's Yorkshire puddings or the work in the house *the results are well worth the effort.*

In the January 1974 National Cyrenian Newsletter Marion and Martin commented:

"...the past two months have been 'ordinary routine'. We managed to weather the Christmas period fairly well. Drink was allowed in the house on Christmas Day and New Years day as we felt this would encourage residents to stay together more."

The following short article was written by Martin about life in the project at 81 Claypath after it had been open for a year:

> "I thought I would put down on paper questions about Cyrenian policy which have cropped up in my mind during the last 8 months here in Durham. The first one is that one of the Cyrenian principles is non-judgmental acceptance and yet if the men do not conform to the four basic rules something is said to be lacking in them or in us, the workers. All the men we get or are referred to us have a problem of one sort or another, e.g. inability to keep a job or even find one, some have suffered from mental illness, been to prison, or have had family break-ups. In spite of the backgrounds of these men they are still expected to fit into a completely alien environment where if any kind of community at all is to be built up it must be of its very nature over a long period of time. Does not Cyrenian policy need a big overhaul in the light of the present situation of single homeless people? Do we move men on when they start to earn £30 a week but can find no other accommodation, or if they did would be unable to cope? Is it a community when some of the committee do not know the names of the men living in the house because they have only visited when a committee meeting takes place there, yet can make decisions affecting the house and all who live there?
>
> "I think that the house in Durham is as near to the Cyrenian ideal of community as one could expect from a set of men thrown together in an unknown situation. Each house will probably vary as to which aspect of community exists at any one time.
>
> "Another thing which has struck me while staying here is the fact that the men can be very harsh with people calling at the house for food, tea and travel warrants mainly in that order. I suppose we can expect this if we class this as a home. I also suppose that the men no longer consider themselves homeless and so cannot see the problems of others in the same light as before.
>
> "I would also like to suggest to other houses and shelters that they get onto good terms with local reception centres. Here in Durham, Plawsworth reception centre built a rabbit hutch for us and also wash the sheets every week, which is impossible for us at the moment. The managers of reception centres will have had quite a few years experience in dealing with homeless people even though they may see them from a different viewpoint.
>
> "Who shoulders the most responsibility? A man bringing up a family, paying off a mortgage and working 40 hours a week, or someone whose rent is paid for him by DHSS, can

do casual work to provide money for boozing expeditions and is already classed as having problems by the fact that he finished up in a Cyrenian house. What incentive have the men got to change? Why should they? Are the alternatives any better?"

This raises many of the underlying issues which remain with the project and of concern to workers, residents and members of the committee throughout the history of Durham Cyrenians and the Cyrenian movement.

Around this time, May 1974, Martin wrote a further article with his co-worker, Betty, for the Durham Cyrenians Newsletter:

"The Cyrenians exist to care for uprooted socially isolated people who have nowhere to go. The Cyrenians try to reach those for whom no adequate provision exist or those who refuse to accept certain kinds of existing help.

"Many of the rootless have been institutionalised (in childrens homes, prison, hospital or one of the armed forces) and find themselves unable to cope alone in the outside world. Others have suddenly lost those upon whom they depended for support and so are unable to form atisfactory relationships.

"Many are unemployable or unable to hold down a job for more than a few days or weeks due to physical illness or a personality disorder. Some turn to alcohol or drugs in an effort to escape. All are homeless and socially isolated. They are caught in a way of life from which it is almost impossible to escape unaided. It is difficult for someone to change his life's habits especially for homeless and disturbed people who are alone in this world.

"The numbers in Cyrenian houses are usually small in order to avoid the anonymity of large institutions. The house in Durham holds eight men and two workers. The fact that one of the resident workers is female adds a homely atmosphere to the house."

This piece of explanation produced for local consumption raises further issues. In particular the message that is being given is couched in

language that indicates different attitudes to those being stated and the reference to female workers in terms of traditional female roles would appear to be at odds with the fundamental principles of community living.

Martin and Betty go on to provide a useful day by day account of events in the project:

> "Monday - Routine day - did the shopping in the morning, cooked tea for 5.30. Took £15 in the shop and arranged for Hanratty's to collect the unreliable items.
>
> "Wednesday - Routine day - Colin called for a wash and a cup of tea - he is one of our regular callers and often brings a bag of firewood. Seems to have got a clean shirt from somewhere.
>
> "Thursday - Took the sheets and towels to Plawsworth Reception Centre to be laundered.
>
> "Friday evening - went up to Dave's (treasurer) to do the weekly accounts. Late evening.
>
> "Saturday - Did the weekend shopping - it took two trips this time as stocks were very low. Man sent up from Robinson's pet shop to buy two of our baby rabbits. We only have to sell seven more to pay for the rabbit hutch!
>
> "Sunday - Two Community Service volunteers spent two hours cleaning the windows, clearing up the yard and weeding the garden. 'Gentleman of the road' called for a wash, clean shirt and trousers, and entertained us on the spoons. House meeting cancelled as one resident out for the day and two others at work.
>
> "Monday - collected two boxes of clothes from the Samaritans. Evening - one of the committee rang up to say that he was sending a man down for some food and a travel warrant. He turned up drunk, was taken to bus station and put on a bus.
>
> "Tuesday - cleaned out the bedrooms. We definitely need a larger house - the men have no space to hang their clothes up, or even put them into drawers. Saw the Secretary from War on Want to divide the shop money.
>
> "Wednesday - Routine day - just the shopping and cooking. Afternoon - fetched the sheets from Plawsworth. Evening - went to Winterton hospital to visit.
>
> "Thursday - discovered a leak in the school - someone had stolen some lead piping. Water Board hammered up the

pipes, resulting in our water supply being cut off at 6 pm in the evening.

"Friday - Still no water. Everyone bad tempered. Phoned round all the plumbers and eventually got one to come out and fix it in the late afternoon. Man called for a bed.

"Saturday - Couple of residents and some of the local 'regular visitors' out on a booze-up starting at 9 o'clock in the morning. No drink is allowed in the house, so all is quiet until after 3 o'clock when they came back, luckily in a good mood. Managed to get rid of the outsiders, the insiders retired to bed.

"Sunday - took some photographs of the house, rabbits, kittens and residents. Beef for dinner - will have to economise for the rest of the week.

In July 1974 Maurice and Mandy made the following comments in the Nation Cyrenian Newsletter:

"Since neither of us had any previous experience in Cyrenian work, replacing Martin and Betty was like jumping in at the deep end...."

"It is a pity that just as we are getting the hang of the house, we in turn must be replaced. This discontinuity can't be good. ... The general outlook on the Durham front is cloudy with definite sunny periods."

In January 1975 Terry reported on the festive season:

"Christmas at Claypath went very smoothly and quietly, with a surprisingly small number of Christmas cadgers calling at the door. Those that did were welcomed by the house in a truly seasonal spirit. ... New Year, thankfully, was surprisingly calm."

The following extracts, giving a flavour of life in 81 Claypath and the Oakensahw house as established houses, are taken from diaries kept in 1977:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mon 7 Feb | 81 Furniture offered, but no transport<br>Man called, house full |
| Tues 8 | Jack (wker) started garden |

| | |
|---|---|
| Wed 16 | Two police men looked around yard but did not call at house |
| Wed 2 March | OKS Mr. Ed Short, Community Development Officer, called |
| Tues 8 March | Samaritans referred 3 men, ref to PLSW<br>Called 11 pm ref bed |
| Wed 9 | Probation referred same man, aged 35, Len said he Was selling jewellery in Fighting Cocks, and had been around all day |
| Wed 30 March | OKS Tony comments on verbal violence |
| Mon 4 April | Lettuce and onion seeds planted |
| Mon 11 Apr | "We now have a tin bath". Garden getting organised |

Although records were kept in 50 Dragonville they did not survive the closure in February 1983. The evidence we have of the volunteer workers expectations and experiences of this transitional period of the project is taken from a house meeting minute book and from reports to the management committee:

| | |
|---|---|
| 4 Feb 1980 | H.M. Support for house needed, Paul and Gillian to visit<br><br>Both workers to attend Northern mtg |
| Mon 14 April | H.M. Workers support. Need more support - contact FOLKUS & other contacts |
| Mon 21 July | H.M. Sarah reported back on training. Raised issue of long training sessions for short term workers. Possibility of own training, benefit bringing project together. |

In March 1980 it was reported in the National Cyrenians Newsletter that Durham was the venue for a joint meeting of workers from Durham, Tyneside and Bradford Cyrenians. discussing their experiences and looking

more closely at the work they do. Unfortunately there are no records of what the expectations and experiences of the workers who participated in this event were. However, a worker from the same house, 50 Dragonville, made a thoughtful contribution to the July 1981 National Cyrenian Newsletter entitled 'Putting the World to Rights':

> "All homeless people are probably fed up with the prejudice against them, and at Durham Cyrenians, we are no exception. Some of the worst of these are that if you are, or were, a dosser, you can't be trusted, you're probably stupid, and your opinion is worthless."

The article goes on to explain that this prejudice is apparent when residents answer the telephone and callers will not speak to them. The this point is made:

> "Unfortunately two of the worst examples of these prejudices have come from people and organisations that should know a lot better: 1, CHAR and 2, National Cyrenians.

The conclusion is made in the words of Solzhenitsyn:

> "'If you wanted to put the world to rights who should you begin with: yourself or others@" from 'The First Circle'".(National Cyrenian Newsletter, July 1981)

The two entries for 1982 only hint at some of the difficult times that were experienced that summer, which will be referred to as part of the experiences of some committee members

| | |
|---|---|
| 22 April 1982 | Committee Mtg, HOUSE MATTERS<br>Job description discussed, & accepted with additions when necessary |
| Mon 23 Aug | Committee Mtg "Two men from each house (50 and 26 Dragonville) had been barred for 1 to 3 days for |

breaking this house rule, with £1 per day for food."

For the early part of the life of 26 Dragonville, again a troubled period, there is no trace of written records, apart from management committee meetings which at that time did not contain material from the volunteer workers viewpoint. However, one volunteer worker, Sue, contributed the following impressions about being in the project at a time when the two medium to long stay houses were being organised.

> "Donna (the previous worker) had seemed depressed and wanted to get out. She told Sue not to stay at Durham Cyrenians because the place was depressing, very isolating and made volunteers very much alone.
>
> "This made an impression on me, and thinking back it had to do with Joe. (a long stay resident) who had caused many of the problems.
>
> "Thinking back Joe held the power in the house and this made working in the house difficult.
>
> "People at different times saw my role differently. When things were going well then I was a person to have a chat with, get advice from or lean on if someone had a problem.
>
> "I was part of the house. Residents saw power lying with the committee, which was reinforced when there was a problem and a committee member was called in, often with an eviction being made. .. Made it difficult for volunteers who were expected to make evictions when necessary, but were denied the authority to do so
>
> "Extra difficulty for me as a woman, both because of residents attitudes to women and because last vestige of the old regime in the form of Bill Williamson whose word was law to the residents."

The detail included here about the expectations and experiences of volunteer workers is provided to convey what these people felt at the time they were involved with Durham Cyrenians. Many of the issues are

mentioned which affected all those involved in the project which will be followed up in the next chapter. Some issues, cleaning for example, arise out of the nature of the project and become central. They become the focus of attention for concern instead of the underlying issues such as conflict in cultural values of committee, volunteer workers and residents. The issue of power, authority and accountability, a central strand running through the development of the project manifests itself in many forms and is an integral element in the relationships of the project.

Other issues are linked more closely to volunteers, the need for support, coping with pressure, commitment to mention some. In the same way some issues arise for residents and for management committee members. Many of the issues arising in the project over the years will be explored in the next chapter.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

To further the understanding of what it is like to be involved in running a project such as Durham Cyrenians I begin by relating my own continuing impressions of what is a vivid, vital deeply emotive experience which is both demanding, rewarding and always unpredictable.

How could the presentation of a wet, insect laden bunch of flowers on my first visit to 50 Dragonville; the complete trust of someone coping with chronic alcoholism; the day the residents came to Sunday dinner, the phone calls in the early hours of the morning, the repetitious moans of a succession of residential volunteer workers, the joy of someone 'getting their own place' or the occasional, and more precious because of that, sense of being part of something very special, be anything other than potentially all-consuming?

The sheer intensity of involvement for me created an ever present tension between being totally drawn into the project and totally rejecting it. This is characteristic of the 'amateur' stage of involvement. Some people who join the committee cannot cope with the intensity and soon leave, a matter which will be looked at in more detail in Chapter 8.

To become an effective member of the management committee this intensity has to be dealt with in one of two ways. A commitment to the project at an intense level can be made, in which case the person becomes fully involved and must learn to move on to a 'professional' stage where the commitment is high, but the necessary distance is achieved to ensure a continuing contribution to the project, not to mention self-preservation.

A personal example of how this worked out in practice was the giving of Christmas presents. During the summer of 1980 the project was stable with few changes in the residents of 50
Dragonville, so when it came to the season of goodwill I bought small gifts for each resident and the volunteer worker. Apart from the fact that two residents left just before Christmas the others were placed by me, supposedly with 'social skills', in an embarrassing position because I had acted as though the residents were personal friends. The next Christmas I made a cake for the project, depersonalised the giving, and thus overcame the problem.

Alternatively, a real but more detached commitment can be made to the project. Although very different, just as valuable a contribution can be made by those with this type of commitment, and in some cases, it can be sustained over a longer period of time.

Within this group of committee members there are 'personal' volunteers. One such person was a treasurer who devoted a great deal of time and

energy into the finances of the project, but had been quite clear from the outset that he did not wish to become involved with residents in the project. More frequently found in this category are 'professional' committee members with an instrumental perspective. They come from agencies and organisations that work with the project, bringing with them expertise, and also, in some cases vested interests.

Remaining involved at the management level, as well as a 'user' offers an opportunity to initiate and make changes to the project, to ensure that the needs of those particular clients are met, as one such committee member explained.

Evidently there is a wide range of expectations for committee members. From interviews with several committee members, past and present, the experiences they have had are equally wide ranging. The major factor distinguishing the experiences of a committee member from those of residents or volunteer workers is that no committee member lives in the Cyrenian house. Valuable contributions have been made to the work of the committee by ex-residents and ex-volunteer workers who have continued their involvement as committee members. This one essential difference results in the project remaining peripheral to the life of the committee member regardless of how involved they become.

The paradox in this situation is that for residents and volunteer workers, while they live in the project, it is absolutely central to their lives, in many cases their entire existence, and yet they have least control over decisions which directly affect all aspects of life in the Cyrenian house. This state of affairs has always been recognised by committee members closely involved in running the project, and has been well rationalised in the argument that house decisions which could destroy the

project have to be safeguarded against. Found to be present from the early days of the project this relationship is a reflection of the relationship between mainstream and periphery in society, where the more distant from the centre the less self-determination exists.

The following are comments made by committee members in response to the question of what it is like being involved in Durham Cyrenians.

David Constantine provided a full and frank insight into his long involvement in Durham Cyrenians which is of particular interest in that it provides an entirely different perspective on many of the issues surrounding the project.

His compassion and curiosity as a writer sustained his interest in the project and as he put it:

> "Dealing with these people, scores, hundreds, ... always these two things together.
>
> "Writing is compassion in the broad sense of moral awareness."

However, David Constantine in being 'slightly worried' about his motives was clear about the two way nature of his involvement:

> "I never, never denied this and if curiosity ever became greater than compassion then I would get out.
>
> "I never used people. My writing is informed by the constant contrast between my own very happy life and the very real misery close by. But not separate (from the project), I had an awful lot to do with it, very intimately indeed. I loved a lot of those men; upset by what upset them.
>
> "I think it teaches you the precariousness of everyone's life."

Bill Williamson and I have often discussed this last point, concluding that it is a fundamental motive for continuing involvement. The continuing involvement of both men was interrelated in that it was the

shared interest of two friends and, in fact, of the two families. But beyond this point, David Constantine said that "they had in common the love of the men, but he had a poetic view of them in contrast to Bill V's scientific view."

David Constantine went on to explain how dominant the project became in his life, an experience I felt I had shared during at least one period of my own intimate involvement both in the lives of residents and volunteer workers:

> "Sometimes our lives were in the grip of it to an extraordinary degree. ...there was a kind of terror when the phone went in the middle of the night.
>
> "I felt fear on Claypath in case there was an ambulance or police car outside the house.
>
> "I used to take a deep breath before house meetings. It was quite a strain and exhausting. Always the worry about workers, the whole time.."

In a more general way David Constantine confirmed my own experience of how the same things happen over and over again, only the names and the faces change, and even they remain the same sometimes:

> "A fantastic amount of repetition. Endlessly repetitive, the crises were the same. The men's lives are repetitive in what has happened to them. Seen as a downward spiral for the men, and sometimes for those involved in it.
>
> "Also a kind of weakness - the men fascinated me. The men we were dealing with were not going to be altered, not like young people might be.
>
> "In lots of ways it was twenty-four hours demanding, you learn that every person is a bottomless pit in the need for attention. Limitless - like the weekend a team of social workers spent on Billy C's marital problems.
>
> "Everybody has this need, but loved ones fulfil it, to shore us up.
>
> "The number of verified cases of real alteration over the years can be counted on one hand. Young people were in a minority, and their presence was disturbing for me. Also

> for the men, for example, Walter G 'no one under forty should be allowed in because they cause all the trouble"'.

In spite of recognising the 'slightly potty' nature of the alternative ideology around in the beginning of the project, as David Constantine put it, he still feels there should be some kind of 'community', of solidarity, amongst people who have shared experiences, 'have had it rough'. But:

> "The ruthlessness of capitalism extends right down to the men. They were ruthless to each other. When someone was trying to change, 'to come off the drink'. It has been called 'the community of the damned'. Those that are down are the hardest on those further down in terms of prejudices and behaviour. At house meetings I would harangue them to the extent they would take someone in off the street, but it wouldn't last long."

This last point illustrates the contradictory nature of the project and the emotions this evokes for those involved. For me this emerged as a love hate relationship. Those emotions expressed by David Constantine were as real to me as he described them, to the extent that at one time it reached a persecution level when I dreaded a knock at the door in case it was an ex-resident who was harassing both workers and committee members.

However this intensity of involvement was not shared by all committee members. The first chairman of Durham Cyrenians, Cannon Maurice Simmons said:

> "I learnt an enormous amount during my time (with Durham Cyrenians). Not what I went for, but I learnt more than I gave, probably."

David Piercy, an early treasurer, recalled:

> "I got to be there (81 Claypath) a lot. The family went down to visit the house, we liked the kids to go, to make them aware. But not for too long, the language, sometimes, you know! John made a real fuss of the kids.
>
> "The odd time one of them (residents) would ring to ask if I would go for a drink with them. I enjoyed being there.

"I spent an awful lot of time there in the end. It was too much, really. More time there than at home"

"I enjoyed doing this in a voluntary capacity and thought it would be great as a job. I talked to volunteers and residents and sometimes helped to make a meal. I used to enjoy it, we would talk all night."

John Hudson, involved for many years and currently chairman of Durham Cyrenians, gave a more analytical account of his experiences of the project:

"Taking responsibility for the Oakenshaw house, its geographical isolation was reflected in the feeling it, and those connected with it, were also out on a limb.

"When the house closed, that role ended, but I felt more in with the group. The role at Oakenshaw was very specific, but isolated, as I was almost the only committee member to visit.

"I think there were changes, almost a mass exodus, which seems to happen on a four or five year cycle in voluntary groups. I became treasurer. Without malice, I don't think you were well inducted as a committee member. You were not clearly and easily given a role. There was an inner and outer group, something which can develop if you don't watch it.

"This issue of roles is important and can influence whether people remain involved or not. Also the factor of power and people not willing to give it up until they are ready, to shield it has an effect.

On the question of the potential infinite demands of the project, John Hudson provided a very different perspective from that of DAvid Constantine:

"I'm not sure about that. I don't think I've given up a vast amount of time at any stage. If I'm honest, two hours a week through the year. Committee meetings, weekly visit to the project, and the other odd occasional thing like the funding application."

Even when pressed, and reminded of extra meetings and emergency meetings, John Hudson only conceded "May be a bit more than that". He offered the following explanation about the differences in demand on the time of committee members:

"There is a difference in the availability of time because of type of job, and when available. I was able to offer a commitment of a limited amount of time, and was clear about the limit on this commitment."

In response to the question about what committee members get out of their involvement:

"A feeling, in the broad sense, you are helping some people that are overlooked. They are not a popular group to help.

"It is face to face work, unlike many other voluntary groups. We have had some good outings, for example, where everyone went their own way, enjoyed themselves and there was no trouble."

This view of involvement demonstrates how the project can remain peripheral to the life of a very committed committee member and is in strong contrast to the experiences of other committee members.

Alan Brice became a member of the committee for a short time after his time as a volunteer worker. This experience consisted mainly in providing support for the worker who replaced him in the project and in helping him to become aware of the issues and what was going on in the project.

After some three or four years Alan Brice returned to the area as a paid worker in a project in a neighbouring city. This time he offered his experience as a worker in the field with much to offer Durham Cyrenians where things were 'up in the air' and had come to a stand still in many ways. In his own words:

I wanted to be involved in the changes, improvements. I wanted the social contact, and to gain experience as a manager; I wanted this experience.

"The involvement has been of great benefit to me, and has been hard work, in supervision for example. Becoming a better worker for that involvement.

"A lot of fun.

"Initially I felt a sense of distrust on the part of some other committee members and a lack of respect for my experience. This created a barrier which was broken down with my increased involvement. Now there is real acceptance. I enjoy social contact with committee members, workers and residents."

Frank White had come onto the committee as chairman in 1982 at a time of upheaval. This was the transitionary period in both terms of negotiating with the local authority for new premises and in changes in the committee. As an ex-community worker and the curate of St. Nicholas Church, Frank White made the following observations:

"The committee members were a bit distant from the men. As chairman I felt it important to know who was in the project and to get to know them. This was how I did face to face work in St. Nics with people coming in off the street.

"I became quite heavily involved with some of the men.

"There were two or three people pulling things along. The workers were fairly unsupported.

"The Durham Cyrenian committee shared many characteristics which seem to be in the nature of the voluntary sector. Some were there in a professional capacity and when their expertise was not required seemed to be passengers. Others seem to be attracted to voluntary organisations because they think they can do what they like and when they want. What is needed is a professional approach, in the best sense of the word, commitment come rain or shine, primarily for the welfare of the men.

"There is a contradiction in a sense, currently involved people don't have time to recruit new people because the limited time available is used on 'getting on with the job'. The role of the committee is a difficult one with two or three key people, with others coming and going.

"I felt we needed to be more careful about who was on the committee.

"Also, the men's presence could stop us standing back, creating a distance necessary when making difficult decisions. Necessary to reconcile this with the need to

include residents in decision making. All this made it difficult to handle meetings.

"I found this most frustrating. We needed to work out a system.

Harry Mears, a retired headmaster, offered some very perceptive general points about his involvement in the project, although it was difficult to obtain his personal experience of being a committee member.

"Because I knew my time was going to be for a definite period, and because of my past experience I recognised the need for continuity through such measures as having an assistant treasurer. I introduced this in order to make it possible to leave.

"Aware of the small size of the committee and the difficulties in recruiting people. I feel it is 'just not the scene' for many, with the face to face contact involved plus the lack of social status to be gained by involvement.

"Also there is little feedback so it is difficult to assess attainment. There is a cultural gap between the expectations of residents and committee members. For me there is a generation gap too.

On the changes that had been made in the way the committee operated, with a move towards working groups on particular issues such as the proposal for the new project for the Housing Corporation and plans to employ a paid worker, Harry Mears felt that this had helped, but really it was the same few people 'with different hats'.

"I became more interested as time went on. I have gained, but always do. It wouldn't have affected my life if I hadn't joined. It has been an extra interest - that is what I have got out of it. Also complete frustration because we are trying to help people who three quarters of the time do not want to be helped."

To end as I began this section with my own experience I feel that my expectations of being involved were confused at the beginning. The

experiences have been rich and varied, rewarding and frustrating, and in contrast to Harry, my life and outlook on life have been radically altered as a result of my involvement, including having the opportunity and the confidence to produce this account.

Many changes have taken place since David Constantine was involved, and as many during my own involvement. His comment was that this was probably inevitable and he accepted them in a positive way. The long process of development over the years has created a formal structure in the project culminating in the replacement of residential volunteer workers with non-residential paid staff. There are many implications for the project as a whole in this change.

Fundamentally the project has become an entity in its own right, with its continued existence guaranteed regardless of any individual or group. Thus, for committee members the central role of day to day involvement no longer exists. It has, in part, become the role of the paid staff but in a well defined way with clear boundaries which were not available to committee members such as DAvid Constantine, Bill Williamson and myself.

Having presented the impressions of those involved in various ways over the years, consideration is given in the following chapter to the complex system of relationships that developed between residents, volunteer workers and committee members.

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## CHAPTER 7: THE PROJECT - RELATIONSHIPS AND ISSUES

### INTRODUCTION

Having established what 'being in' meant for the three groups of residents, volunteer workers and committee members in terms of their own involvement, we now turn to the relationships which existed between these various groups and the issues which arose for them in the context of the development of the Durham Cyrenian project.

There is no definitive version of the nature of the relationships within the project. There are three broad perspectives with identifiable patterns which emerge from the three groups involved. Within each perspective there is a wide range of interpretations of these relationships depending on the expectations and experiences of the many people involved, some of which have already been described.

The various relationships and the power base of the project underlying them are discussed using the concept of centre periphery to extend the understanding of the project as an intensification of industrial society, illuminating the dynamics of relationships in general.

From the history of the project some issues emerge as reoccuring in a relentless fashion, forming a further strand of patterns of life in a Cyrenian house. These issues, and the discussion of the relationships within the project over the span of its development, are described as residents and ex-residents stated them and from the angle of those running the project, thus presenting a 'whole' picture to the reader in terms of time and constituent elements.

An understanding of the complexity of the network of relationships which exist within a project such as Durham Cyrenians can provide some insight into how the informal structures within the voluntary sector as a

whole lead to some of the difficulties which voluntary organisations encounter in the management of their affairs.

Lack of a parameter, boundaries that are not clearly defined, unclear lines of communication, together with unstated areas of responsibility and unspecified accountability all emerge as difficulties for voluntary groups. These problems contribute to a less effective functioning than could be achieved. It is the 'unknown' that links these negative factors, creating problems for voluntary organisations. Fear of the unknown is problematic for society as a whole, and in particular for the voluntary sector without the formal mechanisms to deal with it.

Fear of the unknown characterises relationships at all levels, between societies, between groups in society, between individuals in groups consisting of members from the centre and the periphery and finally between individuals belonging to peripheral groups. In the following discussion the fundamental nature of fear and consequent actions arising from it are analysed in terms of the relationship between the centre and the periphery of society as a whole and within the context of a small group.

Single homeless people represent a peripheral group of society and it is to this group reference is made, but it can be argued that the analysis of fear is relevant to the understanding of the relationship between mainstream society and many marginal groups such as the physically disabled, mentally handicapped, the old and the dying. Again, the discussion of the housing project reflect the mainstream peripheral relationships found in any small group with fear of the unknown ever present and playing a role in those relationships. Insight can also be gained into the relationships between members of the peripheral group by

focussing attention on fear because this emotion is ever present in the process and management of people living in a house through no choice of their own and with little control over their lives in it.

A collective response of mainstream society to the periphery is one of fear founded on the real or imaginary threat posed by the unknown, that is, the shadowy, repellent but fascinating worlds which go to make up the fringe areas of society. This has proved to be the case with single homeless people as a marginal group over the centuries right up to the present time, with many punitive measures being taken by the state in an endeavour to control them. By the exercise of power in this way small but powerful marginal sub-groups of the single homeless such as the wizards of Tudor times and gypsies through the ages can be demystified and large, unorganised groups such as ex-soldiers demobbed after the many wars and uprisings of the sixteenth century and young unemployed people travelling in search of work in the 1980's can be fragmented and controlled. The menace is taken out of the threat and the boundaries of the mainstream peripheral relationship are re-established.

The boundaries between the centre and the periphery are at the same time well defined and blurred, in that it is the centre that has the power to set the boundaries and this setting is a dimension of the process of marginalisation. Thus in the housing field, homelessness is recognised as a social problem, but within the legislation dealing with homelessness, one group, the single homeless, are excluded generally from the provisions of the 1977 Act, redefining the group as peripheral. This being so, the possible threat from this marginalised group is also recognised as are the fears of rebellion by them. Appropriate rules and regulations are introduced to control the situation. This is the social dimension of fear,

of the state maintaining overall control and, therefore, the power of the centre over the periphery.

Fear of the unknown is also an important determining factor for members of mainstream society in the structure of the relationship between the centre and the periphery when at any point of contact. The vast majority of people live within the mainstream society and have little contact with peripheral groups and, therefore, little personal knowledge about them. Thus when faced with this contact the situation in defined in terms of the uncertainty felt. It is this uncertainty that underlies the perception members of the mainstream have of the peripheral group, how they feel and act when in the face to face situation.

Within this context those belonging to the centre are confronted with the reality of the periphery and the retaliation of their own vulnerability to the process of marginalisation. In other words it becomes clear that if certain circumstances, probably outside their control, were to occur they too could move into a peripheral group. Such situations might be death or severe illness of family, personal incapacity through illness or accident or loss of employment. This awareness characterises the relationship between the mainstream and the periphery, which for the former must be clearly defined with narrow boundaries ensuring their control within the relationship. An example from the study of the project is that committee members have complete access to the Cyrenian house while residents do not have access to the homes of committee members to the extent that the addresses are secret. To cross this boundary is to become vulnerable and not in control, so is a situation avoided by most.

A more general example of this relationship is that of the "stranger syndrome". Faced with a stranger in some state of distress the member of

mainstream society is confronted with an unknown quantity and, therefore, lack of control over events, over the boundaries of the relationship if it is entered into and with personal vulnerability. It is not surprising that so many ignore the stranger. For those of the centre who stop to offer assistance they momentarily experience the negative nature of life on the fringe of society. Control over economic resources, over the social situation, over their personal situation is no longer certain. The self presented to the world is at risk. The definition of the situation is in the hands of a stranger.

Those in peripheral groups live with all this permanently. In addition they are denied the basic right of controlling the 'front' they wish to present to the world. For those on the periphery their self is defined by the centre, this being the process of marginalisation in action. (Goffman, 1984)

Evidence from the Cyrenian project suggests that the general nature of the relationship between the mainstream and the periphery is closely reflected in the relationships between management committee and workers representing the mainstream and the residents as members of the peripheral group, the single homeless.

Whatever motives people have for joining the management committee of Durham Cyrenians two characteristics they have almost invariably are that they belong to the mainstream and they have little personal knowledge of the periphery in general or of single homelessness in particular. Thus on a small scale the outline of mainstream peripheral relationships can be found to exist in the project.

Control over the house, both in physical terms through rules and regulations and in personal terms through admissions and evictions

policies, remains with the management committee, in spite of real efforts to involve residents in the decision making process. The real conflict is about residents taking control of the house and their own lives, very much an 'unknown quantity'. This presents a threat to the management committee and the work it does, its 'contribution to society'. Why should this be the case? The answer lies is the fear of the unknown and the threat it holds. The residents are defined as inadequate by the mainstream, ignoring the structure of society which places residents in a position of inadequacy, which is not to say the individual is inadequate. In this way control of the situation is is the hands of the mainstream and any change in the status quo is avoided.

The process of marginalisation operates within the periphery and dominates the relationships between residents who belong to the centre or the fringe of the project, reflecting the dynamics of the mainstream peripheral relationship in the wider context. Once again fear of the unknown is fundamental to the process.

Once settled into the project residents perceive any newcomer as a threat to the fragile stability they have constructed and therefore fear them. As a result of this the new resident will be made most unwelcome and every effort made to destroy his or her credibility as a resident. Older residents are very wary of young newcomers and young people are frequently unsure of some of the older men who come into the project. The mentally handicapped, mentally ill or physically handicapped present an even more potent threat to existing residents. A pattern of "scapegoating" can be clearly identified in relation to these groups of residents. It seems that with such limited resources available one resident can only gain an element of control at the expense of another, giving rise to the

destructive nature of relationships between residents.

Within the project the mainstream peripheral relationship is intensified when compared with the relationship in society. The fear and the threat is, therefore, more intense and inescapable. A resident with an alcohol problem is likely to be confronted day in and day out with other residents with a similar problem. His hatred of himself manifests itself in hatred of the other resident who is a 'looking glass' image of himself. There are many cases of violent and bizarre behaviour which can be explained in this way. In the same way residents have to cope with the mentally ill in a way that is avoided by those in the mainstream who have so much more control over the management of their lives.

A glance at the early days of the Cyrenian project and its development over a decade and a half informs us that the management committee and workers were in control of the lives of the residents. In the early days the philosophy was one of alternative living, community spirit and self support, emerging from the 1960's, but hardly relevant to those society had already rejected, based as it was on choice and self-determination. The concept of people with multiple problems and limited personal resources coming together and solving each others problems was soon abandoned as it proved impossible to put into practice.

Over the years the control of the project and the power to define the lives of residents living in the project remained with the management committee in spite of the stated policy of enabling residents to become self-determining. Residents have little or no control of finances, the social situation or personal relationships in order that the control remains with the management committee who deal with their own fears by maintaining tight control of the project.

The ultimate demand is made of residents as part of the conditions of living in the project, that of self confrontation. To self-evaluate strengths and weaknesses, to come to terms with themselves and their fears is demanded of residents. Few in the mainstream are required to undergo such painful self analysis and it is an impossible imposition to place on residents and has had a serious consequence for the running of the project.

One vestige of control remains with residents - the choice to leave. But even this is thrown into doubt when the contradiction caused by the unfulfillable demand of facing one's own fears is examined. The contradiction is that residents are encouraged to settle in the project, but the demand for self-confrontation is an impossible requirement, so in effect the management committee is forcing residents to leave. The need for control defeats the stated aims of the project and this is an issue which must be faced by the management committee.

In conclusion the need to confront fear of the unknown and come to terms with it must be faced by those in the mainstream who have the stated aim of enabling others on the periphery to take control of their own lives.

For me the value of placing people in impossible situations over which they have no control and have many fears is very doubtful, raising the question of just what services small, voluntary projects can provide. Bill Williamson felt that on balance coming into contact with the project had never actually harmed a resident, and for many it had probably added a quality through relationships with other people that they would not otherwise have had. This is another facet of mainstream peripheral relationships - a fleeting incident for the former being a major event for the latter as they meet in the street and exchange a few words.

Good management, based on sound polices and good practices rooted in real understanding of the world in which we operate,is as essential to the smallest voluntary group as it is to a vast business organisation because it ensures the best use of limited resources to achieve stated aims and objectives.

RESIDENTS

Residents have found themselves to be the least powerful of those involved in the project with one or two exceptions. However, the degree of power held by individuals and sub-groups of residents varies enormously and has a direct influence on relationships.

Each resident living in the project has various 'significant others' to relate to as part of the process of establishing and maintaining credibility. Within the house other residents and residential volunteer workers cannot be avoided, nor can residents and volunteer workers from other houses in the project. Possible future residents, regular callers and others seeking emergency accommodation of one sort or another at the various houses over the years all affect the lives of existing residents and cannot be ignored. Finally, members of the committee have to be dealt with. 'Being in' and remaining in the project for residents is thus no simple matter, requiring interpersonal skills which have not been available to the majority of residents. Difficult relationships form a pattern which runs through the history of the project.

How are relationships with other residents managed? As with all groups there has to be a leader. For residents where there is constant change of membership of the group the power struggle is always present, giving rise to the explosive atmosphere which frequently exists within the

project, together with the destructive nature of virtually all the relationships. Perhaps it is this which has caused many volunteer workers to comment when there is a 'normal routine day'.

As far as relationships with the fairly continual stream of residential volunteer workers, residents have always recognised the ambiguity attached to this role and have made good use of it in terms of achieving their aims within the house. This relationship tended to be instrumental as volunteer workers have been manipulated by residents, but there have also been constructive relationships which have been mutually beneficial.

The one situation where residents do have power and wield it most effectively is in the control of those ex-residents and prospective residents who are constantly on the periphery of the project. The tight control was maintained through an informal network and a formal structure of rules which closely regulated how long 'callers' could stay, where in the house they could go, what 'services' they were entitled to and the frequency of such visits. Such rules are mentioned in the records of all the houses in Durham. At times when there have been more than one house open at a time, rules governing visits by other residents have quickly developed. Clearly the protection of the little 'space' that residents do have within a house becomes central to relationships both within the project and outside it.

Regardless of ideology and individuals the power that the committee has as a group over the lives of residents must define any relationship between resident and committee member. Over the years the stated policy relating to the autonomy of houses and the actual practice has been a source of conflict which was only resolved when the policy and practice would brought into line by stating that the committee must take the responsibility for

managing the project and residents have a right to be consulted about decisions affecting the project.

VOLUNTEER WORKERS

The ambiguity of the role has dominated the involvement of every residential volunteer worker to a lesser or greater extent depending on the individual volunteer, residents and committee members around at the time and the overall stability of the project.

The position of volunteer workers has been ambiguous at various levels. The volunteer worker lives in the house sharing life with the residents in every way. But the worker is not a resident. The volunteer worker is charged with running the house for the management committee, but is not a member of that committee. Thus for most volunteer workers they were given the authority to run the house, but did not have the power to do so. For example, many volunteer workers were unable to evict a resident because that resident demanded a member of the committee should do so.

Not until 1982 were the duties of a volunteer worker written down in a job description. This specified making sure the house ran smoothly and managing relationships within the house as the two main areas of work. There were several contradictions within this. Residents generally expected workers to do the shopping, cooking and cleaning, and this was the easy way to do the job. The committee expected the volunteer workers to ensure that everyone participated in all these activities. This actually required more skill and experience than most volunteer workers had.

The second expectation of the volunteer workers, managing and working with residents on diverse personal problems and relationships was almost certainly outside the capabilities of the vast majority of the young, inexperienced people who volunteered. They were placed in what in

retrospect can only be described as an intolerable position. To ask for the impossible in this way was to court disaster. Much of the crisis management that has dominated Durham Cyremians over the span of years can be attributed to this situation.

The issue of volunteer worker support was always of concern to both workers and committee. As already established by David Constantine and Bill Williamson support was provided for volunteer workers in the first houses run by the project. Certainly volunteer workers at the Dragonville project have had continuing and varied support and supervision. However, from the workers point of view it has never been enough. When there has been more than one volunteer worker the possibility of mutual support does not seem to have been developed, and in some instances has added to the problems. It could be argued that the worker support problem was inevitable in view of the overwhelming task set for volunteer workers.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Unlike residents and volunteer workers the relationships of committee members with others involved in the project have never been central in their lives. More important to some committee members than to others, depending on the type of committee member and the depth of their commitment to the project, but never the centre of existence.

In my own experience it was important to set clear boundaries for relationships with residents. Being friendly without patronising, available when necessary but retaining a separate life. As it turned out residents were on the whole aware of this and kept within the lines drawn. If the same awareness had been shown by many of the volunteer workers the demands on committee members would have been more tolerable for much of the time.

For 'professional' committee members many of the residents were 'clients' and this was the determining factor in any relationship that resulted. The most enduring relationships between any committee member and resident fell into this category, when all concerned were clear about the nature of the relationship.

The structure of the committee, described as being an inner and outer group by more than one person involved over the years, determined the nature of the relationships between committee members. In the early days David Constantine and Bill Williamson were friends whose relationship grew closer as they worked together as committee members involved on a day to day basis with running the project. My own experience seems to represent that of many committee members in that 'professional' friendships are established, but a drink in the pub after committee meetings is the limit of the relationship.

Limits on the extent of relationships cutting across the three groups are essential. There have been occasions when intimate relationships have developed between a resident and a worker, between workers and between a resident and a committee member. In each of these cases great disruption has resulted because the individuals concerned could no longer maintain an acceptable role within the project. For other residents, workers or committee members the resulting situations were impossible to cope with, the only remaining alternative being for those involved having to leave.

The last section of this chapter presents some of the issues which occur regularly within the project. Within this discussion it will be revealed how many of the relationships outlined above work out in the management, running and life of the project as the control of power shifts between all those involved.

ISSUES

Some issues are of central concern to all those involved in the project, although usually from different angles. Finance is an example. Rent, it's amount, method of payment, rebates and lack of payment, has always figured prominently in the every day affairs of residents. For volunteer workers rent collection has always been a dimension of the relationship with residents, being a testing ground of power and authority, while the allowance paid to volunteer workers has attracted regular attention from both residents and workers. For the committee rent is also a central issue in terms of sufficient funding to run the project, along with other potential sources of income. Decisions over expenditure have always been of interest to all three groups. It is within this area that the reality of the nature of the relationships is revealed, with the committee in control and acting, as they perceive it, in the long term interests of the project.

In 81 Claypath the questions of where the money went and how did committee members 'make' something out of their involvement were a puzzle to Gregory. Harry in 50 Dragonville demanded a full breakdown of income and expenditure for the same reason, an exercise repeated again in 26 Dragonville at the request of Glenn. The financial affairs of the project remain of central interest not just because of the 'vested' interests of individuals or of the resident group, volunteer workers and the committee, but because the finances of the house are mainstream for those in the house, peripheral to those running it, not forgetting that attitudes about money and its management reflect class and class culture.

House meetings, their desirability, purposes, frequency and effectiveness, have always brought residents, workers and some committee members into close contact. However, for residents and workers house meetings occupy a central place in life, for committee members they represent only one amongst many events during a busy week. Many irreconcilable differences have arisen over the years as a direct result of the one event, the house meeting, having such diverse meanings for the groups involved.

One issue which has arisen at house meetings in every house run by Durham Cyrenians is that of cleaning or more precisely, lack of cleaning, which has been of concern to residents, workers and the committee. The detailed discussion about cleaning is presented to illustrate the many facets of the relationships within the project.

The following notes are extracts from house meeting minutes of 26 Dragonville, and are included as typical of all the houses.

| | |
|---|---|
| "Tues 3 Jan | Cleaning still a problem, after discussion a rota agreed for trial fortnight |
| Sun 8 Jan | Cleaning rota working out |
| Mon 16 Jan | Cleaning not being done |
| Mon 23 Jan | Cleaning problem, Gilbert felt doing too much Glen to write rota each Sunday |
| Tues 31 Jan | Cleaning deteriorated, must work as ateam, and have pride in house - opinion ofcommittee member |
| Mon 27 Feb | Rota and time limit for cleaning, 12 noon |
| Mon 26 March | Rota for cleaning started" |

The why, how and who of cleaning the various houses run by Durham Cyrenians are questions which have always arisen and have never been

satisfactorily resolved. In this discussion the underlying reasons for the continuing importance attached to this mundane everyday activity are investigated and many major issues for those involved in managing community houses are revealed.

The above extracts demonstrates the regularity of the discussion of cleaning. Similar series of discussions about cleaning occur in the records of each house from 1973, in spite of the fact that they were very different in character, ranging from 81 Claypath rooted in the belief in an alternative society, to 50 Dragonville which developed a more formalised system, although still mainly based on understanding, to the present project where a formal, recorded system exists. No doubt each time the question of cleaning occurred in a house there was a practical problem that needed to be dealt with.

It is argued here that the pattern of reoccurance over thirteen years indicates that there were underlying problems of a more serious nature, of an endemic character, which may have been temporarily solved for a particular group of people. They also show that a small project such as Durham Cyrenians is unable to solve fundamental problems which bring residents, volunteers and committee members to the project.

What exactly are we talking about when referring to cleaning? In a communal house space is designated private and public. Single bedrooms are clearly private space and can be recognised as the responsibility of a resident. Shared bedrooms are semi-private space and the responsibility of more than one resident and therefore a possible source of conflict. Shared space, living rooms, bathrooms, toilets, kitchens, stairs and passageways is public space, the responsibility of all and, at the same time, no one. It is the cleaning of this type of public space that causes the conflict in

itself, and at the same time illustrates the many strands of life within the house.

A further distinction between types of cleaning has developed within the Cyrenian houses in response to the disparity between the individuality of the residents and the imposition of living as a group which is placed upon them as residents. The cleaning of rooms is allocated by various methods, self, rota, discussion, to particular residents. Who has done cleaning and who has not is therefore clear. The other dimension of group living, "clearing up" is more complex as it refers mainly to the kitchen area, in continual use, and always likely to be messy as cups of tea and snacks are made as residents come and go. Add to this that each resident has a different perception of what constitutes "clearing up" and the perpetual nature of the cleaning problem is not surprising at all.

Within the context of managing a Cyrenian house the subject of cleaning has always been quite high on the agenda of matters of concern. Cleaning is a basic, concrete concern which the management committee and volunteer workers have used to hang an abstract disquiet over the fundamental differences in values, norms and life styles between themselves and the residents.

In terms of cultural values the middle class background of the majority of committee members and volunteer workers places importance of the ownership and therefore responsibility of a house. This value is irrelevant to a resident from an unsettled background and thus expressions such as "have pride in the house" used by committee members have no meaning for residents who do not operate with the value of ownership in relation to the Cyrenian house, although it is stated repeatedly to residents that "this is your home while you are here"

The gulf that exists between the perceptions of the committee and of the residents about the ownership and responsibility of a home manifests itself in many ways, one being different norms regarding cleanliness. A residents stay in the house is always of a temporary nature and the analagy drawn between a house with one family living in it and a communal house with strangers coming together through little choice of their own is unfounded and therefore so is the expectation of the committee that residents will willingly undertake activities such as cleaning.

The life style of a committee member, a member of mainstream society, is orientated around work, home and leisure, a structured life style based on rights and responsibilities as an active member of mainstream society. As a member of peripheral society, a resident has a life style which is based on a lack of central activities such as work around which a structured day, week, month or year can be developed. Without access to work a resident also lacks access to many mainstream activities which cost money.

In addition, being part of the periphery excludes residents from activities such as voluntary work because of attitudes about their trustworthiness, for example, a worker must be present in St. Nicholas Church when residents are operating the soup run. Residents are also practically excluded from voluntary work because of benefit regulations which restrict the level of 'out of pocket' expenses that can be reimbursed.

In spite of being denied the opportunities available to those in the centre those on the periphery are still expected to have the same sense of responsibility about property and how to look after it. There would seem to be a flaw in the logic of those managing a project for single homeless people in expecting people who have been forced to sleep in hostels, night

shelters, resettlement units, in bus shelters and under hedges, to adopt the middle class, home-orientated life style of mainstream society.

In the light of this analysis the events and discussion outlined in the extract above can be seen as the values of mainstream society, represented here by committee members and volunteer workers being imposed upon residents who agree to undertake cleaning as part of the strategy for remaining in the house, but who do not have any values concerning cleaning and therefore do not see the necessity to clean for its own sake and in fact avoids the activity most of the time.

The problem of cleaning and how it is dealt with is a useful medium to use in describing and analysing relationships in a project, in that relationships between residents living in the house, between volunteer workers and residents, between management committee and volunteer workers and between management committee and residents are represented symbolically in how the issue of cleaning is resolved.

For residents cleaning would seem to be a perpetual problem as the extract from the records of weekly house meetings illustrates. The ongoing problems with relationships between residents is the real issue in a house where there is a continual change in occupants. This is avoided while attention is focussed on cleaning. The group dynamics of a house such as the reception house of Durham Cyrenians are unusual. In fact if the definition of 'an ascribed group' is accepted, that is, the people involved do not recognise themselves as a group, but are designated this by 'others' then what we are looking at is a set of individuals. (Rosenberg, 1981)

Each member of the 'group' is an isolated individual with a well developed sense of survival which can only operate in a destructive way at the expense of the other individuals in the house. This situation shows up

in several identified patterns of behaviour such as the "top dog" and the "scapegoat" syndrome as well as "gender role" iissue.

The "top dog" situation occurs when one particular resident has lived in the house for some time and the rest of the residents have changed, so the remaining resident holds a powerful position because he has information about the past and about volunteer workers and committee members which can be used to advantage by the resident, but overall can be destructive to relationships between those living in the house and between the house and the committee. An example of this is where the resident Jimmy offers to make the rota for cleaning because he can exercise power by deciding who does what in the way of cleaning.

The "scapegoat" situation arises when there is a particularly weak resident, either physicaly or mentally, (or worker) living in the house. The other residents take advantage of this and any difficulty or problem is blamed on that resident to the extent that leaving the house is the only solution. Once again a destructive, negative facet of communal living. It can be understood in terms of the weak person presenting an unacceptable reminder to the other residents of themselves either in the past, present or future, a situation which they find intolerable.

Each time a woman is a resident in the project there is the added dimension of "gender role" to the cleaning problem. Additionally there is the underlying problem that the female sex presents to the majority of male residents who have experienced failure in this area of life. The outcome of this situation is two edged: the men fall back into the traditional male role of their working class background and will no longer undertake cleaning tasks which they view as "female tasks" and the women adopts the "female" role and undertakes all the cleaning tasks in the house. In both

cases this is problematic in a house where everyone is expected to take part in the running of the house as part of the conditions of living in the house. In the experience of Durham Cyrenians the situation is usually resolved in a most unsatisfactory way - the women resident does not remain for very long in the house.

Cleaning presented as a problem by residents is often a red herring obscuring real problems with relationships. In the extract above we have John complaining about doing too much cleaning, but it is quite likely that he is complaining about being dominated by one or more of the other residents and stating that he is unable to cope with these difficulties. Thus we have a veiled request for help from a resident to a worker which is an indication of the complexity of relationships within such a house

Gender roles as worked out in relation to cleaning are a red herring masking deep rooted cultural and personal issues of sexuality. Many male residents of all ages have revealed problems in relating to women, going back to an 'idealised' view of the mother, a very powerful figure in the working class family, about whom they have complex guilt feelings arising from the general attitudes to and treatment of women. This is relevant for relationships between male residents and volunteer workers, between them and female residents and female committee members. For example, the situation outlined where residents disregard the authority of workers and demand decisions from a committee member has the added dimension that it is the role of male committee members to undertake serious decision making on such matters as evictions.

Other issues arising in the project are of importance to only some of those involved, although inevitably they touch on the other groups.

## ISSUES FOR RESIDENTS

Money is an issue for residents not only at the level of rent, but in how much they can obtain out of the committee and a keen interest in the financial affairs of volunteer workers and other residents.

Four examples of the money issue illustrate how central it is, or rather the lack of it is, to residents and how this affects relationships within the project. First, rebates, refunds or holiday allowances as they have been called at various times represent a discretionary means of returning rent. Records show that in 81 Claypath the rebate system was actually used in two ways. It was used by residents to get back part of their benefit when cash, usually for drinking, ran out. It was also used to pay off arrears in rent. In both instances there would appear to be an abuse of the house by the residents involved.

In 50 Dragonville the system of refunds had become formalised, with clear rules about requests in advance, alternative arrangements and 'acceptable use of the time'.

Project 'trips' feature in the records and memory of each house, and, like the rebate/holiday allowance system, carry a paternalistic attitude with them. 'Picture' money seemed to be the original form of the 'trip' with discussions about 'the house' going to the cinema in response to some residents preferring to spend the money on drinking or gambling. Later, during the Dragonville era the central issue was not about the actual trip, but about the spending allowance that was negotiated each time and was for the personal disposal of each resident.

The third example is that of 'chip money', traditionally given to residents on a Friday, and rarely used for the designated purpose. The point at which this issue became contentious was when it became common

practice to buy food for sandwiches and snacks on the Friday. This meant that the issue was brought to the attention of the committee and had to be dealt with.

The final example of money matters is the issue of loans. Residents have always borrowed from each other and make sure they are aware of any pending payments due to other residents. A rigid 'code of practice' exists between residents and their peer groups, which if not adhered to means being ostracised. Such people, like Nick B, were despised as Jimmy R and Tucker commented.

Residents frequently tried to borrow from workers, a practice that was discouraged and even forbidden, but continued to my knowledge up until 1986. For workers the problem was that whether they did or did not lend residents money, the actual request and response affected their relationship with the resident concerned and the other residents who would be aware of the situation.

Negotiations about money within the project have been on a small scale, but in reflecting the power within the relationships between residents, workers and committee they have been a central element in the development of the project.

The need for a constant supply of money on the part of residents is associated with a problem the vast majority of residents have shared, although for many different reasons, that of alcohol abuse. Despite the younger age group of residents from 1984 this has remained a major problem. The way in which the project operated in providing accommodation and food, plus the 'fringe' benefits such as bus fares has resulted in residents only having one financial concern, that of 'pocket money'.

In 1984 with the development of two smaller houses in the Dragonville project there was a break in the paternalistic management style, with residents managing their own 'food money'. However, this step, and the final one made in 1987 to an 'accommodation charge' system still places residents in an artificial position in relation to the single householder who has to manage every aspect of expenditure, not just food.

To present and maintain an acceptable image is an important issue for residents and ex-residents. This is focussed on behaviour associated with drinking and with personal appearance. Joe, a long stay resident of 50 and 26 Dragonville, always took great pride in his dress. It was with real distress that he told me about life in the 'old peoples home' where he moved on to. First, the staff did not return his own socks from the laundry, in spite of the identifying cotton he had sewn into them. Second, he was particularly careful to conceal his living arrangements from old drinking pals, which stretched his ingenuity to the extreme as Kepier House was right next door to the Working Mens Club.

ISSUES FOR VOLUNTEER WORKERS

Being in an ambiguous situation was the basis of major issues for the volunteer workers. Given authority, denied power, divided responsibility and to whom accountable, resulting in crisis management. These factors must have contributed to issues which are mentioned by volunteer workers.

First the isolation experienced in the work, combined with the lack of privacy and 'personal space' experienced as a residential worker. Support of the volunteer workers by the committee is seen to be central in this matter by both groups. However, the former constantly remark on the lack of support, while the latter, for example, David C, Bill W. and myself would argue that the support was provided and the inadequacy in many cases lay

with the volunteer workers, while never denying the complexity and difficulty of the task required of them.

Commitment to the project, reasons for volunteering and coping with the experiences are all issues for volunteer workers, and this can create problems for the project and its management because these considerations can be given priority over the work of the project. This is something common to voluntary organisations, but has been felt acutely in the Durham Cyrenian project where the volunteer workers had a direct impact on residents which is not quite the same thing as not turning up for a street collection.

ISSUES FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The dimension of responsibility relates as much to management committee members as volunteer workers. It is an issue to be concerned about, to be in a position of making decisions that can radically affect the lives of many people, some of whom have had a very raw deal from life and often as a result of decisions made by others.

Issues to be addressed by the members of any committee are those of commitment, roles within the committee and how the committee works as a group. Over time Durham Cyrenians, because of the nature of the work, has had little time to devote to such matters, but with the formaliaation of the project and the move towards paid staff, the issues have been and continue to be considered and worked out. This process in turn contributes to the effectiveness of the management of the project and the quality of the service provided.

It has been necessary to talk about these issues in an abstract form as part of the analytical process, but of course, in practice, all these issues touch on everyone who is involved in the project. The issue of

communication between the groups and the individuals concerned is one that can only be ignored at great risk to the well being of the project. Communication problems, along with the many other issues surrounding the life of a project, contribute to people 'getting out', the final stage of involvement discussed in the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER 8: THE PROJECT - GETTING OUT

### INTRODUCTION

Leaving the project, the final stage of involvement, is the most traumatic for residents, volunteer workers and committee members alike, although for very different reasons.

Leaving is also mismanged by most people. For example, residents involved in a disturbance may feel they have no alternative but to go, while in fact they could stay and explain what had happened. Volunteers finding they cannot cope with the stress and strain of the job feel that they have to leave, but provide some elaborate excuse rather than say what the real cause of the problem is. Management committee members finding that this type of voluntary work is not what they wish to do attend the odd committee meeting instead of resigning with an explanation.

In this chapter the discussion of why people leave and how they undertake the 'getting out' highlights several issues which have arisen in the descriptions of the project. The focus here is on power, authority, obligations, responsibility and accountability within the conceptual framework of the mainstream peripheral process. Eviction of residents, for all those involved, captures all the elements in a most direct manner.

In addition to the 'personal' experience of leaving there is the dimension of the implications for the project as people go. These may be positive or negative, and how this has changed over time with the development of the project. Originally the survival of the project depended on the continuing involvement of key committee members, to the extent that a National Cyrenian fieldworker commented "that the group might collapse with the departure of David Constantine and Bill Williamson within a short space of time."

Without a formal structure and coherent policies and with the early management style of response to crisis the presence of volunteer workers was essential, but did create dependence upon them. Thus each time volunteer workers left it had a destablising effect on the project.

This era extended into the early 1980's and 50 Dragonville, although by this time the formalisation process was well under way with policies worked out by the management committee and a set of case laws recognised and respected by residents. Running parallel with this, however, was the continuing dependence on individuals, which was drastically reduced when David Constantine and Bill Williamson left, but with some transference onto new key committee members such as Frank White and Linda Garbutt (myself).

With the opening of 26 Dragonville and running it alongside 50 Dragonville, together with the development of the project to include the two smaller houses 24 and 25 Dragonville the transition to full involvement of committee members was made. Working groups and sub-committees were set up to deal with development proposals and issues, for example, a partnership with a housing association to develop a new project or how to undertake the transition from using volunteers to employing paid workers, which arise for projects such as Durham Cyrenians.

By the end of 1985 and the employment of the first paid member of staff the group had developed structures. The process was completed in 1987 when volunteer workers were replaced by a second paid worker and the project had become an entity it its own right. The acid test was that everyone involved in the management and running of the project was dispensable.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF GOALS

Having established the crucial role played by motives, whether recognised and acknowledged or not, in why people join and remain involved in the project, the same criteria has to be used to understand why residents, volunteer workers and committee members leave the project.

The wider discussion of 'leaving' is set here in the context of the achievement or non-achievement of goals and the extent to which this influences when people 'get out'. The project itself has aims and objectives in terms of providing accommodation and support for residents. The process of individuals leaving is central for them, but it also has an impact, positive or negative, on the project as a whole in terms of its own goals.

## RESIDENTS AND GOALS

Leaving for some residents is a positive experience because they come into the project with a clearly defined goal, that of gaining their own accommodation. Even the seemingly endless period between being offered a house or flat and the actual move can be managed by most residents in this position because it will lead to success in achieving the final goal. The contribution to the project of many of these residents is a positive one and their leaving can have a destablising effect on the project.

Grant was one such resident as the record of his stay in Dragonville illustrates:

| Date | Description |
|---|---|
| Wed 21 March 84 | Referred through City Centre Youth Project |
| Wed 4 April | Moving to 24 at week end |
| Mon 9 | HM Nagging Mark S re cleaning |
| Sun 13 May | HM Agreed to propose £7 spending money for trip to Cttee Mtg |

| | |
|---|---|
| Thur 30 Aug | His sister (no contact for 8 years) rang, but he was out |
| Tues 6 Nov | Still living in 24<br>At Cttee mtg reported on success of Bradford trip of 4 Oct<br>Cttee agreed to fund a further trip |
| | Agreed Grant to go on Crisis walk with Chris (worker) |
| Mon 10 Dec | At cttee mtg, reported he and Chris had completed walk, raised £100 |
| Sat 5 Jan 85 | Cleaning the council house offered to him |
| Tue 8 | Chris to DHSS re furniture grant |
| Tues 24 | Has moved, gift of £20 agreed |
| Wed 17 April | Volunteered to help with Lunch Club of local Community House |

At the other extreme are residents with the aim of staying without paying for as long as possible. Thus when their intention is discovered they quickly go, leaving behind an uneasy atmosphere created by relationships founded on deception and lies. Mal in 1985 sustained just such a situation for three weeks or so as the following illustrates:

| Date | Description |
|---|---|
| Tue 13 Aug | Arrived from Sunderland |
| Thur 15 | WC "Served breakfast" |
| Fri 16 | Cleaned kitchen cupboard |
| | Went to Bible mtg with Sam and Alan |
| Sat 17 | WC To AA mtg with Sam |
| Sun 18 | WC Baking cakes for tea - Alison (wkr) and Alan (her boyfriend) invited |
| Mon 19 | HM Agreed to attend AA meeting<br>Went to pictures out of house keeping savings |
| Tues 20 | Harry threatening him with a knife |

| | |
|---|---|
| Wed 23 | Found to have claimed at Stockton, Sunderland and Durham DHSS so asked to leave because he could not pay rent |
| | Recall: Told of involvement with housing campaign about Bed & Breakfast for young people, in Middlesbrough and London Vincent (wkr) and Linda (me, cttee member) both felt 'conned' by Mal. |

The vast majority of residents do not have clear goals, having had a life style where day to day survival is the only objective, an intensification of a working class life style which does not include long term planning but is based on responding to each crisis asit arises. However, many of these residents do come to have a view of what they would like in the way of housing in the future. They do eventually achieve a move to a wide variety of accommodation ranging from old peoples homes, sheltered accommodation, long term hospital stay or tenancies with housing association or local authority housing departments.

For some residents with severe and multiple problems the project has offered the opportunity to return many times. This allows these people to have 'space' for periods of time and has fulfilled a function for some. Barry is a resident who has lived in each of the houses run by Durham Cyrenians and his story illustrates this pattern of use:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fri 21 Sept 73 | 11 am admitted to Winterton Hospital |
| Sat 1 Dec | Went to Plawsworth Reception Centre |
| Sat 8 Dec | Did not pay rent - spent night in Plawsworth |
| Sun 9 | Returned with rent (? after this comment) His payment of rent queried at H.M. by Brian Concern with finance, esp. theft. Barry therefore threatened to punch Brian. Brian's concern is: Barry is drinking every day, alth. not working, while he, working, can only afford to drink Thur to Sun. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Fri 14 | Told to leave house, bec. not paid rent yet again; Mainly bec. not contributing to house. |
| Tue 12 Feb 74 | Sleeping in school. Says he has permission from Cilla |
| Fri 1 Mar | Called - has got a furnished flat and job at Monos. |
| Fri 18 Oct | Called, given bed for night, new wker |
| Sun 19 | Stays night |
| Sun 20 | House meeting - agree he can stay to Fri |
| Thu 19 Dec | In on one weeks trial |
| Sat 21 | "Came in drunk and was duely vague about rent" |
| Sun 22 | Missed house meeting, presumed drunk Did not return |
| Sat 4 Oct 75 | Admitted, one weeks trial |
| Thur 30 | Left |
| Fri 31 | Returned |
| Wed 12 Nov | Cheque did not arrive. "Left us financially embarrassed" Maurice lent house £5 |
| Mon 31 Jan 77 | Trying to get in |
| Tues 1 Feb | Trying to get in |
| Sun 6 Feb | Not admitted until debt paid |
| Sun 13 | H.M. decided he can be admitted at discretion of house |
| Mon 10 Oct | H.M. Listed as debtor |
| Tue 1 Nov | In |
| Wed 9 | Had refund and left |
| Fri 18 | Called for a bed, refused |
| Mon 18 Oct 82 | Living in 50 Dragonville |
| Thur 28 June 83 | Cttee Mtg: Martin Koltai, Prob. did not recommend Barry for house |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Agreed: if Barry pays then can come in, in accordance with house mtg |
| Sun 3 Feb 85 | WC Arrived. Doug Stewart, PO, phoned last week. Clive said in evening Barry was barred. Barry's birthday |
| Wed 6 | WC Did not return, had rent Tues |
| Fri 15 | WC At Soup Run. Returned key |
| Sun 10 March | WC Getting room in 26 |
| Mon 11 | Did not return |
| Mon 25 | Agreed back in if Probation Office pay £10 owing.Voucher: £29.05 rest daily by Barry so "so we can hopefully (being incredibly optimistic) hope to help Barry to stay here" |
| Wed 27 | Still here, paying rent |
| Sat 30 | WC To do shopping with John (resident) |
| Wed 10 April | Asked to leave because abusive |
| Fri 12 | Asked to return |
| Sun 14 April 85 | Came to lunch, Req to return put to next cttee mtg |
| Sun 21 | HM Joe, Emma (wkr) David - no Came to lunch. Told decision |
| Wed 24 | Cttee mtg: Agreed no place for Barry until he attempts to overcome drink problem, on recommendation from HM |
| Wed 22 May | Cttee mtg: agreed not to consider request for readmittance yet |
| Mon 10 June | HM Agreed could not return bec "he was chucked out originally" |
| | "Has brought drink into house as visitor" |
| | "Not welcome as resident, see him as spongsing" |
| Sat 3 Aug | WC Not allowed in for 6 weeks |
| Tues 10 Sept | Cttee mtg: Asks to be admitted |
| Tue 7 Jan 86 | Cttee mtg: Agreed could return if(a) Space (b) Paid arrears |

| | |
|---|---|
| Fri 31 | HM In 26<br>Can be trusted with shopping money |
| Mon 3 Feb | VC Would not pay rent, so evicted<br>His birthday, he recalled in an interview |
| Tue 4 | Cttee mtg: Not welcome back at present but may be at a later date! |
| July | IN<br>Barry shopping, cleaning and cooking |
| Aug | Leaves |

From this outline of the life of one single homeless man over a period of thirteen years a basic pattern of admittance, leaving and re-admittance can be identified. This pattern is the central feature of this career. Other patterns overlay the basic pattern as the case history shows, developing out of the interaction between Barry's own goals in relation to the project and the view the project, residents, volunteer workers and committee members, has had of Barry.

The formalisation process that has characterised all aspects of the project can be seen in the imposition of conditions for re-admittance in the 1980's. At the same time a change in the attitude of Barry himself both to his own situation and to the project is evident as he moves towards premature middle age and is less able to cope with a life of 'sleeping rough'. Perhaps the strongest thread that runs through this career is that of loneliness and isolation, both mentioned in the journals of the Cyrenian houses and in interviews with Barry and other ex-residents. As a successful survivor, using many strategies usually at the expense of others, he was resented and disliked. This being the case there was always pressure to get him out of the project when he was in, or to exclude him when he was out. In this way the group dynamics operating within the

project can be identified as playing a crucial role in the number of times Barry lived in the project, alongside his own abuse of it in terms of being in and not paying the rent.

At the age of forty-three and suffering from general ill-health Barry readily acknowledges that he must make changes in his life style as an early old age approaches, but at the same time he says 'I like to be out'. 'Being out' may be Barry's choice, but all those agencies and individuals that he has used to exercise his choice over the years will observe that he is increasingly 'at risk' - that is, one severe sub-zero spell could kill him as he 'sleeps rough' on our very door steps - and will respond to the situation to avoid the natural consequences of his choice which are not acceptable to them.

In this society for those who will not take responsibility for themselves, many others will. It could be argued that this is the fundamental reason why Barry has been allowed to return to the project so many times. For the community Barry represents 'the Old Cumberland beggar' of the last century.

VOLUNTEER WORKERS AND GOALS

There have been three distinct groups of volunteer workers based on the goals they hope to achieve through their involvement in the project. First, the volunteer workers who wish to 'do good' and change the world, whether from a political or religious stance; second, the 'experiential group' who hope to learn about 'the meaning of life' or themselves and third, the volunteer workers who have a long term goal of becoming social workers and give their time and energy in exchange for the experience they need to further their careers.

Leaving for the latter group is as unproblematic for most as their stay with the project in that it is agreed in advance, with shared expectations on the part of volunteer worker, residents and management. Within this 'contract' the goals of each can be met with a satisfactory completion of the agreement for all concerned. Denise O was one such worker who contributed a great deal to the project in 1984 while gaining invaluable experience for her future career before going on to a cqsw course.

However, the consequences for some residents, the remaining residential volunteer worker and the management committee still had to be dealt with. Recruitment of a further volunteer was as usual difficult and time-consuming, new trust and new relationships had to be built up by volunteers and residents, and at the same time the remaining volunteer had to manage alone. These points are mentioned not just for history, but because they point out the issue of continuing in a project which is almost impossible to achieve with only residential volunteer workers.

Over the years there have been many volunteer workers searching for something through volunteering. In the early days there were people with alcohol-related problems applying to work in the Claypath house and there are cases up to the present day of such people wishing to be volunteers. It is possible that volunteers who have experienced drink problems have much to offer a project, but conversely they could have a devastingly destructive effect on residents within a short time span.

For the management committee to consciously take on such a volunteer has always been viewed as too risky both for the overall running of the project and for some residents living in the house. However, over the years there have been occasions when such a recruitment has been made in ignorance of the full facts about the volunteer. The outcome has inevitably

led to a crisis situation, usually very quickly, creating multiple problems for the management committee. Not least because residents are quick to inform those committee members closely involved that 'we could have told you that 'so and so' had a drink problem'.

In comparison with a volunteer with an alcohol-related problem those volunteers who are there 'just for the experience' can present more complex problems for the residents and management committee in the very passiveness of their world view. Such inward-looking volunteers tend not to actually do the work required of them, do not gain the trust and respect of residents and do not take on the responsibility of the running of the project. But for them they may well be achieving the goal of 'learning about the meaning of life'. For the management committee in more than one case such volunteers have had to be asked to leave because they have proved to be so inadequate in achieving the goals of the project.

Just as problematic for the management committee are volunteers who join the project with their own intentions regarding the work. Often with the zeal associated with 'liberal reformers' they do not have the capacity to understand that the majority of single homeless people are in such circumstances as a result of the way in which society is organised, and in particular the housing market and access to it, rather than through any personal inadequacy. The morality, therefore, of allowing such volunteers to 'do good' to residents, as in one particular case in 1985, which included the introduction of Bible reading before breakfast and by personal domination persuading residents to attend church, must be brought into question and examined critically.

Volunteers with such a 'mission' have such an on-going goal to achieve that they are unlikely to leave of their own volition. On the other hand it

may not be obvious to the members of the management committee that the policies of the project are not being implemented when, for example, they are contrary to the beliefs of the volunteer. This situation can be divisive in the extreme because those committee members who see the reality of the situation have to inform others so that action can be taken. In 1985 this process took over three months and proved to be a difficult and delicate one to complete, with the volunteer finally being asked to leave.

An additional problem with such volunteers is that they create real dependency on the part of residents, instead of the move towards independence that has always been one of the aims of the project. Thus in asking them to leave the management committee is seen by residents as 'in error' with the ensuing instability for the project which follows. However, it is the role of the management committee to manage and it is this responsibility that must be taken on, even when difficult and painful decisions have to be made.

Finally there are volunteers who see the work of the project as the medium by which to change the way in which the world is organised. Of course it is not possible to achieve this goal by being a volunteer in a project such as Durham Cyrenians, whether it is the creation of an alternative society, a cause close to the hearts of many of the early volunteers, or a peaceful socialist or feminist revolution hoped for by some. But the effect can be that outside interests take precedence over the immediate work of running the project and working with residents, so yet again the volunteer is ineffective as far as fulfilling obligations to the project.

As a project with very limited resources Durham Cyrenians has for many years used volunteer workers and has been at their mercy. With all the

problems of recruitment there has been little choice available, and on the whole it has been a matter of taking whoever offers their services. For the project, therefore, the goals of volunteer workers have been secondary. The successful volunteers have had a wide range of personal objectives, but have had in common the ability to achieve a balance in implementing the policies of the project and achieving whatever it was for themselves.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND GOALS

The contrast between residents and committee members in the matter of 'getting out', the extent of choice available to them and the degree of self-determination they have demonstrates the power that attaches to membership of mainstream society in comparison to the powerlessness of those on the periphery. The issue is that the project is central to the lives of residents in a way it can never be even for the most involved committee member, but it is the latter group who make the decisions and have the final say in how the project runs.

Committee members are volunteers and as such much of the discussion relating to the residential volunteer workers is also applicable to them. The 'professional' committee members do have clearly defined goals, the very reasons for their involvement. As long term and on-going objectives they will remain, but such committee members will leave if they change jobs. The goals will continue to be worked for by the new 'professional' committee member who will probably be allocated to the project. For other committee members the 'getting out' is likely to be organised, but nonetheless still traumatic. For some the length of time they intend to be involved is specified from the outset, the goals of contributing to the project and positive use of spare time for that person, such as Harry Mears, are achieved and the business of leaving is well managed.

For one founder member, David Constantine Durham Cyrenians had become an important part of his life and on reflection he felt that it would have been extremely difficult to leave while still living in Durham. His move to another part of the country solved the problem that he had that he really felt he wanted to leave but could not do so while still living in Durham. Another such committee member, Bill Williamson had to address exactly the same situation. His departure was a planned one over a considerable period of time, so that future plans could be made in a considered way. Both these ex-committee members felt that they had made their contribution to the project and that it was a positive step for them and Durham Cyrenians for them to leave, allowing new people to come in and develop the project in a way that was appropriate for the new problems that were emerging in the early 1980's.

For a considerable number of committee members their involvement does not appear to meet their needs or achieve goals. Thus there have been many people coming along to one or two committee meetings and then disappear without trace.

Within the broad context of voluntary work this would seem to imply that involvement in an organisation such as Durham Cyrenians, working with single homeless people, does not carry the social status and personal contacts of those groups in the voluntary sector dealing with more 'acceptable' causes. In addition, the work of the project has required committee members, as well as residential volunteers and currently the paid staff, to be involved with residents in a face to face way. In other words volunteers working for such organisations as Oxfam are seen in public to be 'doing good work' but rarely do they come face to face with the starving people of the Third World.

CHOICES FOR WHO?

This study of Durham Cyrenians within the analytical framework of mainstream peripheral society and the processes involved in the relationship between the two has highlighted at each stage, 'getting in', 'being in' and 'getting out', the effects on people's lives, present and future, of their position in society.

Within mainstream society there are many options available for the various aspects of 'managing life'. With the move towards the periphery these choices become narrower and for those that find themselves on the fringes of society there are few options available. In concrete terms the discussion of a small accommodation project gives a reality to this conceptual analysis.

Committee members, almost exclusively from mainstream society, have the choice to cease their involvement with the project at any time. Apart from dealing with issues such as a feeling of guilt about letting down other committee members who may be personal friends and in some instances, dealing with their own feelings about homelessness and its causes and the relationship with their own secure housing position, committee members can leave and, as Harry Hears said, the involvement will have had little or no impact on his life.

Volunteer workers come from a wider range of backgrounds than committee members, but nevertheless still generally from mainstream society. A stint of volunteering is one short episode in the early part of most volunteers lives. For almost every one of them they had a real option to leave because they have a place to return to. Although the closeness of the residential volunteers involvement means the experience will remain with them for a long time and in many cases did have an impact on the

future direction of their lives, the situation of volunteers is radically different from that of residents.

A central aspect of committee members and residential volunteer workers having an unrestricted choice in the matter of leaving is that of their responsibility and accountability to the project. Because anyone can volunteer there is a lack of control over membership which has given rise to many of the management problems discussed earlier. The issue here is that in these circumstances it is unlikely that the most appropriate and effective provision is going to emerge for residents.

For Durham Cyrenians and many similar organisation the replacement of residential volunteer by two experienced paid staff goes some way to addressing the issue. With agreed contracts their responsibility and accountability is defined. To complete the process measures need to be introduced to ensure there are guidelines for areas of responsibility and an agreed accountability for committee members

Residents, single homeless people living on the edge of society, have few real options open to them. The project while they live in it is central to their lives and leaving is frequently a sudden and traumatic experience.

1973 - Brian

| | |
|---|---|
| Sun 27 Jan | Soiled workers bed |
| Mon 28 | Did not return from work, stayed out all night. Breakdown of self-image after event of previous day |
| Tue 29 | Worker went to see him at work, said all was forgiven. Brian returned that night |

Frank - 1973

| | |
|---|---|
| Thur 20 Dec | Dissatisfied and in a bad temper |
| Fri 21 | Drunk, disruptive, demands money back |

| | |
|---|---|
| Sat 22 | Leaves in the morning, returns in evening to "doss" |
| Sun 23 | Returns again, told he cannot stay |

Kevin - 1977

| | |
|---|---|
| Fri 13 May | OUT, rows width Don and Nigel |
| Wed 22 June | Row with worker |
| Thur 23 | Out after row with worker |

Bob - OAKENSHAW - 1977

| | |
|---|---|
| Thur 27 Jan | Attacked Jim (who returned late with shopping) with carving knife. Police called, Bill arrested |

Raymond - OAKENSHAW - 1977

| | |
|---|---|
| Wed 2 Feb | Went out, did not return. Raymond had been on the road for about 16 years, so he might not be ready to settle. Also he was to work |

Alan - 1977

| | |
|---|---|
| Mon 13 March | HM Left on 3 March, Winterton, at least one month |

Danny - 1980 and 1983

| | |
|---|---|
| | In 50 |
| Thur 28 June | Cttee mtg: Under House Matters: Left with £8 food money and £2 borrowed from Ray. Agreed: to pay Ray, so Danny debt is £10 to the house |

Cyril - 30 ish - 1983

| | |
|---|---|
| Mon 10 Jan | £8 debt, £1 pw |
| 28 Feb | 50 closed, moved to 25 |
| Tues 8 March | Out for drink on premises and violence |

Desmond - 1982

| | |
|---|---|
| Mon 18 Oct | In hospital |

Eric - 1986

| | |
|---|---|
| Thur 17 April | Bored, waiting for flat |
| Sat 19 | V. bored, nearly went into the garden |
| Wed 30 | Returned late, had been beaten up |
| Fri 2 May | Birthday: Good mood. Flat soon ready |
| Tues 20 | Moved stuff into flat with help of John H |

Jeff - 1986

| | |
|---|---|
| Thur 10 April | Punch up with Simon, warned again - out |
| Fri 11 April | Tried to get on with Simon. Did not work out. Evicted both. |

With no where else to go the choice to remain in the project is hardly a choice at all. The option of leaving is in many cases not left to the resident at all because eviction figures prominently in the life of the project. Eviction of residents is an issue which illustrates relationships within the project, once again providing an example of power, control and the mainstream definition of the situation denied to those on the periphery.

EVICTION OF RESIDENTS

The reality of leaving for the majority of residents is of crisis and a sudden departure from the project. In the case of eviction by the project the powerlessness of the resident is obvious, the unequal nature of the relationship between the mainstream and periphery, project and resident is overt. When a resident undertakes 'self-eviction' the appearance of a resident making a choice, exercising control, hides the reality of the situation. The powerlessness exists in a covert form and more invidious for that as will be evident from descriptions of various evictions that follow.

The eviction of a resident is a traumatic experience for all those concerned, the project and all the residents, the workers and management committee members involved and not least, for the resident leaving. From the early days of Durham Cyrenians, when acceptance was given the highest priority and the level of tolerance was remarkable, the need for a structure to deal with residents who abused the project was recognised. Such a structure, providing boundaries and anonymity, roles to play for those involved thus removing a sense of personal responsibility for making what could be life and death decisions about the lives of others, informal initially became formalised over the years until it became incorporated into the licence agreement which each new resident has to agree to as a condition of residence.

Thus the business of eviction was made as comfortable as possible for those who had to undertake the task, but for residents the experience remains as painful as ever. Whether the matter rests on rent not being paid and consequent eviction or whether a resident finds it impossible to remain for personal reasons and creates an eviction situation, the evidence suggests that such residents feel they have failed, let down those who have made provision for them. Being unable to face this responsibility many residents blame the project and turn against it, most frequently in a vindictive attitude towards workers and, in some cases, committee members.

Underlying the management of evicting and being evicted is the unequal relationship which exists between the project and the residents which manifests itself if the manner in which the former makes decisions for the latter. The nature of this relationship becomes veiled in many ways as resident participation is encouraged within the project.

Resident responsibility, a concept characterised by mainstream values, attitudes and norms, has been imposed upon residents by the management committee and used as an evaluation criteria. The peripheral world view does not generally encompass this particular notion of responsibility so it is hard for those moving from the periphery to understand and act in accordance with it. An additional dimension to the issue of resident responsibility is that it shifts the emphasis away from the project, its standards of management, accommodation and levels of support towards the career of the individual resident within the project.

The outcome of this position is that the major issue of how secure, safe and comfortable the project should be for residents to live in and to gain the confidence to adopt the mainstream ideas about responsibility and act accordingly is very easily avoided. In practical terms the instability of the project resulting from the continued use of short-term residential volunteers along with the discontinuity and varied level of support given did not provide the necessary environment and prevented residents taking responsibility for themselves in the way that was expected of them.

There is a clear contrast in the attitudes of residents from the early houses, mainly older men, with those of many of the young people who have lived in the project in the mid-1980's. The traditional view was to accept the criteria laid down by the management committee while at the same time passing all responsibility to them. As Johnny said to David Constantine about a particularly disruptive resident in 81 Claypath, "You've got a problem there". Johnny did not perceive that it was also a problem for him as a resident and for the house as a whole. In the summer of 1986 a young male resident insisted on keeping his motor bike in the kitchen of 26 Dragonville. He refused to take responsibility for the possible

consequences of his action for the house and the other residents. His responsibility was the safety of his motor bike. Steven was evicted on the grounds of disregarding the request to remove his motor bike, that is, on the grounds of responsibility defined by the mainstream value-system, not his own.

WHY ARE RESIDENTS EVICTED?

Evictions, both by the project and self-evictions, happen at two levels. First, residents are evicted if either basic Cyrenian rules or house rules are broken. This principle has remained throughout the existence of the project although there have been changes and adaptations in the actual rules. This system has provided clear boundaries which have provided a framework both for the informal developmental stage through to the formal arrangement of a licence agreement introduced in 1986.

Second, and more difficult to define, is where the continuing stay of a resident is detrimental for all concerned. In this situation, where perhaps the resident is not accepted into the resident group because of some physical or mental health problem, because of past history or age, and is 'scapegoated' by the other residents, the resident may leave, but is likely to do so in the context of crisis. Leaving will be dramatic, by ambulance, police car or with a social worker. Sometimes even when the situation is so bad the resident will stay until asked to leave, again in a crisis situation, not accepting the reasons given for the request to leave and asking to stay.

The unclear boundaries in this second area create problems for all concerned. The issue of responsibility has to be addressed. For example, is the management committee acting in a responsible way to accept residents with special and high care needs without the necessary resources

to meet such needs? Has the provision of young, inexperienced, untrained volunteer workers to run houses and support residents with severe multiple problems been a responsible way to manage an accommodation project? And has this provision prevented the development of more appropriate accommodation by the statutory sector? These, and many other questions, should be asked by management committees of all voluntary housing projects.

The recognition that there have to be rules and regulations which set the parameters for living in the project and running it is one thing. For management committee members and residential volunteer workers to evict a resident, for whatever reason, has always remained a traumatic and painful exercise. For residents who become aware that they need to leave the decision to go is equally painful and in almost every case constitutes a major crisis for those concerned. How the decisions are taken and carried out illustrates how corporate and individual responsibilities are dealt with.

## HOW RESIDENTS LEAVE

Such a major decision affecting the life of another person has to be removed from the responsibility of an individual to that of the management committee as a whole. Policies made by the management committee, including those on eviction, have to be implemented by someone representing the committee, someone playing a role. In this way the committee member, the volunteer or the paid worker avoids taking personal responsibility for the eviction.

This approach to dealing with eviction, based on the world view that the affairs of men should be ordered, belongs to the mainstream value system. It provides those people who are contributing to a provision for

the single homeless with the ability to rationalise the action of making a resident homeless once more.

The mainstream value system is imposed upon those living in the project in that they are held responsible for their actions, that is, breaking the rules, and are, therefore, responsible for their own eviction. The flaw in this argument is that the majority of residents do not share the mainstream world view. Life on the fringe of society is disorganised, chaotic and the only responsibility is that of individual survival.

The discrepency in the attitudes of those evicting and the residents being evicted has varied over the years. The older residents living in 81 Claypath and 50 Dragonville, while not sharing the view that they were responsible for being evicted, did acknowledge the 'rights of a situation', a feeling of fairness and a sense of justice did exist amongst them in relation to the whole business of eviction. The acceptance of authority that underpinned this attitude was not to be found amongst the young residents moving into the project from around 1983.

Most of the young residents, aged between 18 and 25, did not share the value system underlying the operation of the project. They refused to take any responsibility for their own actions and rejected the authority of those running the project, "middle class, middle aged and middle of the road people" as Bill, a resident, put it early in 1987.

It may be that there is a further dimension to the issue of responsibility which spans the life of the project. It is possible that it is not that the notion of responsibility is rejected by residents, but the fact is that the concept itself is not understood by them, even when explained in simple language.

The case of Doug, evicted in 1986, illustrates the process of someone coping with life within the constraints of the restricted code of language. Doug was evicted for continuing to keep his motorbike in the kitchen of 26 Dragonville after he had been asked not to do so because of the fire risk and the health hazard this was causing. His view was that his motorbike would be stolen if kept outside. Not being able to understand the concept of responsibility that the project was using, he was unable to step outside the context of the situation. The result was that the worker became the object of intensification in that he took his frustration out by hurling abuse at her. Thus his eventual eviction was on the grounds of verbal abuse and intimidation, for which he still would not take responsibility, because his view was that it was caused by others trying to make him conform to a value system he did not share or understand. For him the worker was to blame for his eviction.

The actual eviction was carried out by me as a committee member. Doug was unwilling to leave, although he had packed his belongings in around two dozen plastic carrier bags for which he had no means of transport to take them to the friend's house where he was going to stay. For an hour or more he maintained he was not going, with frequent outbursts against the worker. Finally recognising that I was prepared to stay as long as necessary Doug made a phone call and someone came to collect him, by which time he had switched his anger away from the worker to me, but as a committee member, not as an individual. The episode was a painful one, providing a close insight into the problems of running a project, about power, authority and the control that becomes invested in members of the committee.

There is evidence from the Mass Observation studies that official language is totally incomprehensible to working class people. One of the

many surveys carried out in the late 1930's looked at the response of the people of Bolton to political literature distributed during an election campaign. Mass Observation distributed their own material in the format of a football coupon and found the response to be almost twice of that to the usual 'political material' format. The jargon used by the politicians was, they argued, a barrier to real communication with the people. (The Natives of Bolton, BBC Radio 4, 23 October 1987)

The question for the management committee that is raised is whether they can convey concepts to residents in language that is understood. The wider issue is whether a limited vocabulary restricts the understanding and expression of concepts and emotions.

THE IMPACT OF EVICTION

Eviction in whatever form represents failure for all concerned. For the resident being evicted or bringing about the need to leave, for workers and for the project itself eviction means that goals have not been achieved. The overall effect of an eviction is a destablising one, although there may be positive consequences for some of those involved, for example, other residents or residential volunteer workers who had a negative relationship with the person evicted.

In addition the eviction, however ordered the procedure may become, belongs to the world of disorder. It is sudden and traumatic for everyone that is touched by it.

FOR THE RESIDENT EVICTED

Being asked to leave or creating a situation where there is no alternative but to leave the project is failure in public for a resident. It is public acknowledgement of a private problem, thus adding loss of dignity and respect to personal problems. Thus the impact of the eviction is not

just about the practical problem of where to stay next, but it is about the very identity and public image of that resident. It is about what resources are available and the strategies to be used in preserving an image and maintaining it during the crisis of eviction.

Gilbert - 1978

| | |
|---|---|
| Tues 28 March | HM Had invited Harry in, but he is barred. Gilbrt then abusive, and worker put him out. Agreed: Could return, but pay £1 fine |

FOR REMAINING RESIDENTS

For people in the process of establishing a fragile hold on a world of their own, creating a new social reality, with the hope of eventually reestablishing themselves in mainstream society the eviction or sudden leaving of someone who has become part of their own world can be extremely disruptive.

Group dynamics within a small project are complex. Placed together with little choice the relationships between residents are frequently volatile and almost always intense. Thus the suddenness of departure is a problem for remaining residents. One day they have a friend, a supporter or an antagonist living in the same house, they next day that person has been removed.

The pattern that emerges following an eviction includes other residents either being evicted or leaving suddenly. Thus over the years there are settled periods and unsettled periods which can be linked to evictions.

FOR THE PROJECT

Eviction of one resident clearly has an impact on the project as a whole, an impact which has been felt most keenly by those involved in the day to day running of the project. In the early days there were few

evictions, but when someone had abused the project the sadness of the situation was felt by committee members and volunteer workers alike. The link between the strong belief in acceptance and a high level of tolerance of eccentric behaviour was initially very strong. However, the recognition that such tolerance would soon destroy the project and hope for an alternative type of accommodation for many future residents quickly emerged along with a more formal set of rules to guide the running of the house.

As the project developed and moved out of town to 50 Dragonville the responsibility for running the project fell more onto the residential volunteers, partly because committee members did not call in most days and partly because new committee members took over from those who founded the project. But the responsibility of evicting residents was one that few volunteers could take on, resulting in disruptive situations continuing for much longer periods and a time of instability for the house.

New and inexperienced committee members shared similar difficulties to those of the volunteers in relation to evicting residents, in spite of the formalised policy and the authority they had to carry out evictions.

With the replacement of residential volunteers with paid workers the degree of acceptance diminished considerably. A formal selection process has resulted in the exclusion of people most likely to fail and therefore experience eviction. However, in this situation eviction is even harder for those residents who are evicted and for the workers who have much more control over who is accepted into the project. The evidence is that there are fewer evictions with paid workers and a much greater level of stability and continuity for the project. But when there is a problem it is a serious one indeed.

Finally evictions and their impact on the project affects the public image of the project. Referral agencies, the local community, the police and funders alike soon become aware if the project is going through an unsettled period. Lack of confidence in its policies and practices is something a project like Durham Cyrenians cannot afford. Credibility is essential for the work it is currently engaged in and for future development to meet the ever increasing and changing needs of single homeless people.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT EVICTIONS

Although eviction is the aspect of project life which demonstrates most clearly the relationship between the mainstream and periphery in terms of control through power rationalised into authority, there have been occasions when it has become the focus of residents taking control.

The context of the three episodes which illustrate this point is that of working class culture which has become intensified for those on the periphery. The first two are about the individually and isolation of a life style centred around day to day survival which on rare occasions is broken by such people coming together as a group. The third is about the gender issue within the same context.

David Constantine was greeted on his arrival at 81 Claypath with the sight of the residents standing outside with their meagre worldly good packed in an assortment of old bags and tattered suitcases. They had become organised into a group and gained a unique solidarity. The message was that unless a solution was found to whatever the current problem was they were leaving. Residents had defined the situation and had taken control through their demands.

The young residents of 24-26 Dragonville were if anything more alienated than their predecessors, but would come together in a group against the workers and management committee as became evident when all the residents knew who had stolen items from the project, but no one would say who it was.

In both these cases the residents took power by adopting the mainstream mechanism for gaining and keeping power, that of becoming a group. This was against the values of the basic life style of the individual survival strategy which characterises the periphery. Within this context the group could only remain in the short term. The power did not come to have any authority through which it could be exercised and was soon lost.

In August 1986 the residents came together as a group, united by the inability to evict a women resident who had broken all the rules and every convention about living in the project. The issue was that of gender because any male resident in the same position would have been evicted without any hesitation. The conflict was between the wider cultural norms relating to women and attitudes about women and the position within the project where rules had been broken and the outcome clearly defined.

Using the power of the resident group the male residents would not agree to the eviction of Hilda, who took advantage of the situation. This power was exercised through the channel of the House Meeting. There was certainly a conflict of interests in this situation, which were not addressed by those residents. Several of the residents actually left rather than face up to the responsibility of following the eviction policy. A very unsettled period followed this episode, leaving the issue of women in the project as unresolved as ever.

Evictions are always about someone else having power to change dramatically the life of someone else. Power must be regulated through negotiating polices which are implemented by those who have the authority to do so. The House Meeting had the authority to evict the resident, but was unwilling to take the responsibility. From this it can be argued that although it is possible for residents, or other peripheral groups, to take power they are faced with the problem of how to keep it and use it effectively.

## LEAVING - CONCLUSIONS

'Getting out' has proved to be the most problematic stage of involvement for residents, volunteer workers and committee members alike. Issues of commitment to the project; of loyalty to 'significant others' also involved; of motivation, responsibility and obligations arise for each person as they leave.

However, the evidence about how 'leaving' is achieved suggests that the process of disengagement is mismanaged by most residents, many volunteers and quite a few committee members. The result is that the whole experience tends to be a negative one for all those involved. Distrust and suspicion surround the frequently sudden departures of residents; volunteers who left before the agreed date, whether in a sudden way or an arranged way left problems for residents and committee members as did some volunteers who would not leave. Committee members who did not make a formal resignation but did not participate create a problem for the rest of the management committee in terms of the uncertainty arising in this situation which prevents the recruitment of additional people to the committee.

As an illustration of the reality of the relationships between residents, volunteer workers and management committee members 'getting out' has proved to be most useful. Even with a commitment to resident participation in the running of the project, the powerlessness of those living in the project is apparent from the discussion of how people leave. Within this microcosm of wider society the dominant and powerful position of the mainstream in relation to the periphery is demonstrated over and over again. As Bill V commented, "Our requirements are unfulfillable therefore we ask them to leave."

REFERENCES

Case Histories of ex-residents drawn from House Meeting minutes, journals and committee meeting minutes

Interviews with residents and committee members

The Natives of Bolton, a documentary about Mass Observation, BBC Radio 4, 23 October 1987

## CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUSION

This chapter is not a summary of the contents of the previous chapters but rather a reflection on where things have got to at the end of 1987 both for the single homeless and for Durham Cyrenians. Issues raised in relation to the single homeless and for marginal groups in general which have not been fully addressed in this study are highlighted as areas for further research. Finally, a brief speculation is made about what the future may hold for the single homeless and for Durham Cyrenians.

The single homeless remains marginal in society. Government action ensures that this is so. The young are to be denied householder status with the introduction of the latest Social Security measures in April 1988. For the old and vulnerable single homeless the closure of resettlement units, combined with the very under-resourced 'care in the community' initiative will have dire consequences, swelling the numbers without anywhere to go.

A positive reinforcement of the marginality of the single homeless is evident in the proposed decontrol of rent in the private rented sector and the changes in housing association funding which requires the raising of capital on the financial market. The consequent 'assured rent', that is, an economic rent, will have no guarantee that it will be covered by housing benefit in the future.

Such are the circumstances of the single homeless with few choices available to them, with access to a marginal slice of the accommodation market over which they have very little or no control. In other words they do not choose where they live or how much they have to pay for it, a very different position to that held by the majority, having access to mainstream housing, who have choice in all such matters.

The evolution of Durham Cyrenians has been described within the context of the voluntary sector and its relationship to the state. The marginal nature of the project has become less marked with the securing of trust funding and negotiations for joint social services and health authority funding. Running parallel with this development has been a move to meet the needs of a slightly less marginal group of the single homeless. The provision is more directed and more effective for the specific group now provided for, but at the same time those once accommodated in the project are now excluded. The innovatory voluntary project becoming established as part of overall provision is an identified pattern within the voluntary sector. Durham Cyrenians, changing in 1988 to Durham Action on Single Housing, has moved on to make way for a new generation of radical projects. These will be marginal and address the needs of those most distant from the centre.

Housing policy remains an issue. Highlighted as International Year of Shelter for the Homeless 1987 has contributed little to provision of housing or to the right to housing in the UK. Recommendations from the Inquiry into British Housing, led by the Duke of Edinburgh, which reported in July 1985, included a radical integrated system of housing support to replace tax relief on mortgages and housing benefit, a major role for local authorities and rent control in the private rented sector (Inside Housing, Vol 2, No 29, 26 July, 1985, pp 1-2). None of these have been incorporated into the 1987 Housing white paper.

The Housing Rights Campaign was launched in December 1986 by the major national voluntary organisations involved in housing and homelessness issues (New Society, Voluntary Action supplement, 12 December 1986). The central demand 'for decent housing for everyone' as a right has had little

impact on the government. This is an example of the marginal status of the voluntary sector within the decision-making process about a problem in which they play an increasingly essential role as providers in response to government initiatives.

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Womens homelessness, women in the project and gender-related issues have been touched on in this discussion. The first should be a priority for research because more information is needed urgently so that appropriate provision can be made. The second and third are relevant to this in that increased awareness is needed about women in society. How women have come to be homeless, how they have come to declare this, how they came to be in a project such as Durham Cyrenians and how they found the experience of living there are all matters which can illuminate the position of women within the class structure and cultural system of society and, in terms of power and control, as a marginal group.

Both access to health care and how the single homeless are treated once in the health care system are areas which need looking at in more detail.

The sexuality of the residents and volunteer workers that have lived in the project is an area not directly looked at in this study although it has been referred to as an underlying problem within the relationships between people in the project.

A range of communication issues have been raised. The close contact between individuals from working and middle class cultures focussed attention on the use of different concepts and language to the extent that the question of meaningful communication was brought into doubt. This is a

fascinating avenue to pursue and could lead to an understanding of basic misunderstandings that occur between people.

A concern that has been raised for me in undertaking this work could be termed 'the moral basis for caring' and underlies the questions about the voluntary sector in terms of contributing or otherwise to major social problems; and about responsibility and accountability. Within this at an individual level is the question about volunteers and their motivation for such work. The danger of a return to a system reflecting the philosophy of the old Poor Law should not be ignored.

The 'outsiders' that have moved to the margins of the periphery have been identified, but their situation and relationship to the periphery and the centre requires closer examination.

What began as a specific study of a small project providing accommodation for the single homeless has led to a wider understanding of marginal groups. To pursue this conceptual analysis in relation to other marginal groups, for example, the elderly, those with disabilities and as suggested above, to women, may lead to increased understanding of the process of marginalisation. This in turn could contribute to changes in the relationship between the centre and peripheral groups. In the first instance those belonging to the centre could take into account the needs of peripheral groups as they perceive them, with a move towards equality in the decision-making processes within society.

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Voluntary Action (1986) New Society, 12 December

APPENDIX 1

## CYRENIAN REPORT ON HOMELESS IN DURHAM

Compiled by Stuart Young and Dorothy Graham
(Full time voluntary workers)

The house at 81 Claypath has been open for more than a year now. At first we had no information as to how great the need in Durham for such places was, but records have been kept of people calling for accommodation, and we are able now to substantiate our claim with figures. In this report, we decided to take a short period - 4 months - and break down the information collected in that period, rather than use all the information we have to write a long report.

Over four months then (March to July 1974) enquires were made at the house about accommodation for 41 persons, most of them single men in their 40's and 50's. Six of these men were admitted as we had free beds at the time, but the other 35 persons had to be refused, either because they were unsuitable or because the house was full. By unsuitable we mean that they wanted only overnight accommodation and in any case among them were three married couples, for whom we have no facilities at all. In terms of actual numbers, 11 wanted overnight accommodation. The house is a long-stay house, and we do not take such people. But 24 were looking for a permanent place to live, and we had nothing to offer.

These 35 persons had heard of the house from various sources. 12 had "just heard of it", 6 were referred by the police, 4 by the probation service, 4 by hospitals, 3 by the Samaritans, 5 by local vicars and

students and 1 by Nightline. Three were in fact ex-residents. Not all of them were technically homeless - 4 were at the time in hospital, 2 in prison and 2 were staying with relatives. But for one reason or another they felt that the Cyrenians offered a more suitable place to live. The majority were local men, or men who had originally come from this area and now wished to return to settle down.

We could do little for these people. Five were sent to Bed and Breakfast places, 10 were recommended to go to Plawsworth Reception centre, 1 was sent to the shelter in Newcastle, 1 to the Cyrenian house in Gateshead. For the rest there was nothing that seemed suitable that we could suggest.

This is an average of nearly 3 enquiries a week, and although we have only taken 4 months, the records for the whole year show that the number of enquiries remains constant.

When we came to look at the men who have been resident at the house, we decided to take the figures for the whole year, as the figures for only four months are too small to be significant.

Since the house was opened *(April 1973)* we have had 30 men resident here at one time or another. Of these 30, 8 had been referred by members of our committee, 4 by other residents, 2 by the Samaritans, 1 by Winterton Hospital, 1 by our local G.P., 3 by the prison, 1 by a local charity (War on Want) and 10 had "just heard about it" and turned up at the door.

Of the 6 men now resident, 2 have been with us a year or more, 1 for nine months, 1 for five months, 1 is an ex-resident who had just been re-admitted, 1 has been with us a week only. The length of stay of those admitted varies from 2 days to 14 months. Of those not now resident, 14 stayed less than a month, 3 more than one month but less than three, 5

more than three but less than six, 1 more than six but less than a year, 1 more than a year.

Again, most of our residents are local people, or men who have been in the area for a couple of years. Of those who have left, most have not been seen since; 4 are still in Durham and call from time to time for tea, 2 are in Winterton Psychiatric Hospital, 1 moved into a council house, 1 went to live with his mother, found digs, 1 went to stay with his girl friend at her parents' home.

As with those for whom we had no accommodation, the residents were not all sleeping rough before they were admitted, though about half had been for a few nights at least. Six had been at Plawsworth Reception Centre, 1 at Earls House, 1 in a caravan, 2 in Winterton Hospital, 1 in a bedsit, 1 was staying with friends, 3 were in prison, 11 at a Salvation Army Hostel.

Three men sleep regularly in the derelict school at the back of the house, and we have had as many as six. Two call every morning for a cup of tea and a wash. In addition, we offer most people calling asking for help tea and something to eat though not a full meal as this would put too much strain on the housekeeping.

<u>One conclusion is self-evident from this report</u> - There is a need in Durham for at least one more residential house, and possible a night shelter as well. We don't know what happens to people we turn away. Maybe they would be among those who stay less than a month, but they should at least be given the chance.

## PEOPLE ADMITTED TO HOUSE

| Referred By: | | Night Before Spent: | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Committee member | 8 | Sleeping rough | 12 |
| Other residents | 4 | Plawsworth | 6 |
| Samaritans | 2 | With friends | 1 |
| Winterton Hospital | 1 | In hospital | 2 |
| Local doctor | 1 | In a bedsitter | 1 |
| Prison | 9 | In a caravan | 1 |
| War on Want | 1 | Salvation Army | 1 |
| "Just heard" | 10 | Prison | 3 |
| | | Not known | 3 |

## PEOPLE WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO ACCOMMODATE

| Referred by: | Who they were: | What they wanted: |
|---|---|---|
| Police | Indian student | Overnight accomm. |
| Probation | - | Any vacancies |
| - | Single man | Hostel/S.A. |
| Bishop Auckland Hospital | 70 year old man | Permanent place |
| | Single man | Permanent place |
| - | Single man | Permanent place |
| Probation officer | Single man | Permanent place |
| - | Single man | Bed and breakfast |
| County Hospital Social worker | 61 year old man now in hospital | Permanent place |
| Winterton Hospital Welfare worker | Ex-resident now in hospital | Permanent place |
| Students | Single man | Permanent place |
| Vicar | Single man | Permanent place |
| - | Ex-res, now in hospital | Permanent place |
| Police | Young boy | Permanent place |
| Vicar | 2 young boys | Permanent place |
| - | Ex-resident | Permanent place |
| - | Single man | Permanent place |
| Nightline | Young local boy | Overnight accomm. |

People we have been unable to accommodate (cont'd)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| - | Single man | Permanent place |

| Referred by: | Who they were: | What they wanted: |
|---|---|---|
| - | Single man | Permanent place |
| Police | Married couple | Overnight accom |
| - | Single man | Permanent place |
| Seaham Probation | Man coming out of prison | Permanent place |
| Samaritans | Married couple put out by relatives | Temporary accomm |
| - | Single man | Overnight accomm |
| - | Single man | Permanent place |
| Winterton hospital Social worker | Ex-resident, now in Winterton | Permanent place |
| Samaritans | Single man now in Plawsworth | Permanent place |
| - | Man now staying with sister | Permanent place |
| Police | Married couple | Temporary accomm |

In Appendix Two are the figures for 1985/6. Although the informtion is not directly comparable, it would seem that referrals continue to be made from the same agencies. Residents use projects such as Durham Cyrenians for various reasons and the various lengths of stay reflect this fact.

Young people and childless married couples are represented in the first report.

Appendix 2

Referral figures for April 1 1985 to April 6 1986

Total no. referrals 126(108)

Referral Agencies

| | |
|---|---|
| Self | 34(25) |
| Samaritans | 24(20) |
| Probation Serv | 17(24) |
| Social Services | 9(10) |
| Churches | 8(3) |
| CAB | 7(4) |
| Hospitals | 4(6) |
| Community Groups | 3(6) |
| Family | 3(1) |
| Plawsworth | 3(1) |
| Police | 3(1) |
| Youth Projects | 2(6) |
| Others | 7(1) |

Sex

| | |
|---|---|
| Male | 119(90) |
| Female | 5(9) |
| unknown | 2(9) |

Age

| | |
|---|---|
| Under 18yrs | 5(3) |
| 18-21yrs | 29(28) |
| 22-25yrs | 5(4) |
| 26-30yrs | 6(10) |
| 31-40yrs | 8(8) |
| 41-50yrs | 13(17) |
| 51-60yrs | 10(8) |
| 61-64yrs | 5(1) |
| 65+yrs | 3(3) |
| unknown | 42(26) |

(Last years figures in brackets)

## Occupancy Figures for April 1 1985 to April 6 1986

Total Occupancy 44, all male (38, 36 male, 2 female)

### Age

| | |
|---|---|
| 18-21yrs | 11(7) |
| 22-25yrs | 2(1) |
| 26-30yrs | 5(4) |
| 31-40yrs | 7(7) |
| 41-50yrs | 12(12) |
| 51-60yrs | 4(4) |
| 61-64yrs | 2(2) |
| unknown | 1(1) |

### Referral Agency

| | |
|---|---|
| Probation Serv | 10(12) |
| Self | 9(5) |
| Samaritans | 6(8) |
| Hospitals | 5(4) |
| CAB | 3(1) |
| Churches | 3(1) |
| Social services | 2(1) |
| Plawsworth | 2(1) |
| Others | 4(5) |

### Lenghth of stay in Project

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-14days | 18(14) |
| 14-28days | 5(3) |
| 1-2mnths | 4(4) |
| 2-3mnths | 3(2) |
| 3-4mnths | 4(3) |
| 4-5mnths | 3(2) |
| 5-6mnths | 3(2) |
| 6-9mnths | 3(5) |
| 9-12mnths | 0(2) |
| 1-2yrs | 1(1) |

### Lenghth of stay in no.26

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-14days | 21(15) |
| 14-28days | 8(6) |
| 1-2mnths | 8(6) |
| 2-3mnths | 3(3) |
| 3-4mnths | 0(1) |
| 4-5mnths | 2(3) |
| 5-6mnths | 1(3) |
| 6-9mnths | 0(1) |

### Lenghth of stay in no.25

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-14days | 0(0) |
| 14-28days | 1(0) |
| 1-2mnths | 0(0) |
| 2-3mnths | 3(1) |
| 3-4mnths | 2(2) |
| 4-5mnths | 0(1) |
| 5-6mnths | 0(0) |
| 6-9mnths | 1(0) |
| 9-12mnths | 0(0) |
| 1-2yrs | 1(1) |

### Lenghth of stay in no.24

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-14days | 1(0) |
| 14-28days | 0(0) |
| 1-2mnths | 2(1) |
| 2-3mnths | 2(1) |
| 3-4mnths | 1(0) |
| 4-5mnths | 0(0) |
| 5-6mnths | 0(1) |
| 6-9mnths | 1(1) |
| 9-12mnths | 0(1) |

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# Appendix 3